EXPLORING STUDENT BECOMING WITHIN TVET POLICY DISCOURSES AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE CARIBBEAN: A HEURISTIC FOR UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Education by Arlene L. Smith-Thompson

June 2018

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June 2018

Acknowledgements

I express sincere gratitude to the tutors and supervisors at the University of Liverpool for their expert guidance on my doctoral journey. In particular Dr. Janet Hanson – my primary supervisor who demonstrated much patience and understanding at important junctures while allowing me to explore untapped boundaries in my thinking about TVET perspectives in HE and FE and relatedtheoretical and policy structures; Dr. Anne Qualter – my secondary supervisor for providing important feedback at critical stages; and Dr. Morag Gray and Dr. Michael Watts who both demonstrated a keen interest in my progress. I must also thank my close network of family and friends for their unwavering support, encouragement and belief in my capabilities to pursue further studies at this stage of my life. I also drew strength from my belief in God which helped to create that spiritual balance that I needed to complete this journey.

Arlene L. Smith-Thompson – Exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of difference

Abstract

This thesis explores student becoming and related perceptions of difference within Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) policy discourses. It is a case study approach underpinned by the principles of appreciative inquiry (AI). The context is a community college in the Caribbean with a strong focus on higher education (HE) as well as further education (FE). The case study is a specially designed TVET programme for further education students. The purpose of this study was to determine the contributing factors that shape the policy environment for these students as well as their resultant life experiences as understood by the students themselves, tutors, policy designers and programme administrators.Thematic analysis of the transcripts of semi-structured interviews and other documentary information illuminated current TVET policy trends, including gaps, at the macro, meso and micro levels of programme administration. These findings served as heuristics for understanding the politics of difference in general and the extent to which a becoming ontology could be promoted in this micro-context and even further afield.Gilles Deleuze's becoming ontology provides the main theoretical premise for exploring concepts of difference in internally in human being and to rationalise the totality of the student experience. Amartya Sen's capability theory is presented alongside Deleuze to further help to inform external policy processes and futuristic thinking about TVET and the higher education and further education environment. A major finding in the results was a natural coupling that seems to exist between becoming and capability. Also, while the voices of actors might be heard at the micro and meso levels, the extent to which they influence policy decisions at the macro level is virtually unknown. The results of this study also reveal that the social dimension of the student's overall development, including their possible futures, is as important as the current economic focus and should be factored in to corresponding policy discourses.This case study will contribute significantly to my

professional practice in two ways. Firstly it provides an in-depth perspective on TVET policy at the tertiary level which has not been undertaken to-date given the relative 'youth' of the community college environment in this particular context. Secondly, it provides a professional platform to actively engage key stakeholders in areas such as policy advice onTVET policy in higher education through such avenues as a community of practice that could advocate for change.While this study's aim was to present a view of the TVET policy environment with specific reference to factors that could help or hinder student becoming, the results also revealed that there are other areas that could benefit from further research such as the voices that should inhabit the TVET policy process and the importance of teacher education training within TVET skills courses.

Dedicated to my mother Ruby Smith-Newberry, my husband Macgarvey Thompson and my son Khalil Smith. They were the wind beneath my wingson each step of this doctoral journey at the University of Liverpool.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 The research project

For many non-traditional students coming from a background of social disadvantage, the transition from secondary education to higher or even further education could be challenging. This could be attributed to the heterogeneity of variables in their environment that call for nuanced policy approaches that are not only concerned with access for such students but the quality of their life experiences beyond institutional walls (Burge, 2012). No more is this evident than in the area of technical vocational education and training (TVET) which is a form of education that emphasises skills-based training.In fact, TVET supports a range of contextual capabilities that contribute to a country's overall development (Tikly, 2012).

Historically countries in the Global North and South have explored various institutional arrangements for addressing the educational needs of TVET students mostly through skills training courses that are often designed to reap economic benefits. Quite often such policies are externally driven and may unintentionally overlook the importance of creating differential pathways for the development of the internal 'self' of such students through critical linkages in the cognitive and affective domains that create opportunities for new futures and new *becomings* (Taylor & Harris-Evans, 2016).

This thesis explored student becoming at a community college that I will refer to as Lambert Community College (LCC) in the Caribbean in attempting to understand the politics of difference that often exists within such policy contexts.A philosophy of becoming as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994) offers alternative lenses from which to rethink theory and practice in further education (FE) and higher education (HE) in ways that recognise diversity and difference from a social justice perspective (Taylor and Harris-Evans, 2016). In this way, difference as a construct is viewed as a positive and not a negative phenomenon.

While a becoming philosophy should not be considered as a panacea to solve the problem of disaffection in education, it certainly provides an avenue for policy reconceptualisation. It is on this theoretical premise that this study explores student becoming within the HE policy environment in the Caribbean as a heuristic for understanding the politics of difference.

1.2 Research questions

The following questions are addressed in the study:

1. What are the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students?
2. How is the concept of student becoming interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?
3. How is the concept of difference interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?
4. To what extent are existing policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering students' becoming within TVET programmes?
5. To what extent are policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering the understanding of difference within the TVET HE population?
6. To what extent are there gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice?
7. How can the student voice enhance policy discourses about becoming and difference?

1.3Personal rationale for study

The TVET programme, which is the focus of this case study, was initiated by our Ministry of Education and Culture in 2006, in collaboration with LCC. As a ministry administrator at

the time with an interest in providing meaningful experiences for disaffected young people, I worked closely with the college's administrators at its inception.

This programme was specifically designed for young people that were neither in education or training as a result of disaffection from school. The programme was intended to serve as a bridge for skill development, future employment and even further education. The TVET curriculum initially provided for students to learn a skill in areas such as wood-working, small engine repairs, house-wiring and air-conditioning/refrigeration. It was then extended a few years later to include computer applications and culinary arts.

For the most part, the focus of LCC's TVET training for the past 10 years has been an economic one that was designed to prevent such students from being on the fringes of society by providing basic work skills. While some participants have benefitted in positive ways from attendance, the programme has always experienced a high attrition rate of almost 50% annually. This suggests that there is a need to explore novel ways of thinking about such arrangements to ensure the future flourishing of students that a philosophy of becoming provides.

As an insider-researcher, having previously worked at both institutions where my research was conducted, I was interested in understanding the challenges that are associated with providing further education opportunities within in a predominantly higher education environment. Clegg (2012) argues that insider-research could be problematic as it depends on a range of variables in the policy environment.

Hanson (2013) provides more specificity in citing possible challenges such as the managementof multiple roles; internal organisational politics; ethical dilemmas and even finding a voice for the voiceless. These are all factors that I had to contend with in this case study given my previous work associations with certain research centres and individuals. I managed to allay any ethical concerns by maintaining an objective stance on the research issues I explored as well asbeing constantly aware of my professional context.The extent to which an insider-researcher manages such an intricate network of roles and relationships

is largely dependent on the individual's skill levelin navigating such environments(Hanson, 2013).

I also recorded my thoughts and experiences in a reflexive diary that I have kept since the commencement of my doctoral studies in 2012. During the taught phase of the programme I updated it at least once per week. As I moved into the thesis phase my entries became less frequent, to once per month, as the demands of work and study grew. In that diary I documented any new knowledge I had gained, my hopes and even my fears. It was a space where I could also document my personal struggles and triumphs on this journey and perhaps most importantly how I have evolved professionally as an insider-researcher. This practice afforded me the opportunity to look back at myself in that frame to analyse the effectiveness of my researcher position. As Cunliffe (2003) posits, reflexivity "unsettles representation by suggesting that we are constantly constructing meaning and social realities as we interact with others and talk about our experiences" (p. 985). Constructing such realities will also help to inform my future professional practice.

As I concluded the write-up phase of this thesis, the study context was impacted by a major Category 5 Hurricane Irma that caused widespread damage to the country's main industries and infrastructure. This was a contributing factor in my recent decision to retire from active government service. As I see it, there are opportunities for much comparative work in TVET to be undertakenthroughout the Caribbean region even in my private capacity. I also feel strongly about creating a 'platform' for voices to be heard on TVET matters. To this end, the respect I gained as an insider-researcher could augur well for my further work that I desire to undertake in this field.

1.4 Context and purpose of study

The Caribbean territory in which this case study was conducted consists of a small group of islands with a total population of about 35,000 residents. The context boasts of a fairly

well educated populace. At the higher education level, many tutors hold post graduate degrees to the doctoral level.

In 2015, the government of the day presented an updated policy mandate for the TVET programme at LCC (Manifesto, 2015). The intent was to advance the present curriculum and training content so that participants are not only trained in specific skill-based areas but that they also become certified. The renewed TVET policy focus was designed to develop new entrepreneurs and increase participation in the local economy in areas such as mechanical and electrical engineering, drafting, computer science, office and document management and culinary arts.

The government's political mandate primarily helps to inform the TVET policy process and is usually not challenged at the meso and micro levels. The language of the discourse, however, appears to be more economically focused towards skill building for future employment rather than socially driven. Given the tendency to maintain the status quo in such a policy environment, how could an exploration of a *becoming* framework influence the core of such discourses?

The main purpose of this study is to enlighten TVET policy and practice within the HE environment in my context. While attitudes towards TVET are slowly changing for the better, stereotypical behaviours still exist among the population where the subject area is not always highly regarded.This study is also uniquely positioned given the smallness of the context in which it is placed and the fact that no other study todate has focused on this type of TVET environment in a formalised manner. For these reasons, the research outcomes are likely to garner interest from individuals and institutions that influence policy particularly at the meso and macro levels. While such an appreciation would be desirable, it is more important to pay attention to the emergent voices of policy, particularly those of the TVET students in considering the interests of those that could be best served.

1.5 Contribution to new knowledge in the TVET environment under study

Increasingly, organisations such as tertiary institutions are being called upon to bridge the economic and social sustainability gaps (Rowe, 2007) through targeted responses such as internationalisation, widening participation and lifelong learning opportunities. Such shifts also demand transformation of policy processes in the political, social and economic environments (Grant-Woodham & Morris, 2009) out of which policies and programmes emerge. In this vein, Grubb (2006) vehemently argues that policy efforts in vocationalism at the tertiary level "should be guided by efforts to create the best forms" (p. 40).

In an increasingly plural and complex society, determining the "best forms" for TVET within a tertiary policy environment could create a plethora of theories, discourses and analyses as conceptions of policy could significantly differ from one educational context to another. It is with this typology of understanding that Taylor and Harris-Evans (2016) suggest that this is an opportune time to activate some key philosophical concepts on becoming from Deleuze and Guattari that could support students in the life's endeavours.

In a similar vein, Ball (1997) suggests that national policy actors could benefit from shifting global policy trends in education through what he terms "a process of bricolage" (p. 75) where ideas are reshaped and recontextualised (Bernstein, 2003; Singh, Thomas & Harris, 2013) for the greater societal good. What these interpretations of policy and education seem to convey is the importance of developing the capacity to work with the 'known' such as strengthening education curricula in TVET for sustainability (Majumdar, 2011); improved TVET legislation (Machin & Sparreboom, 2005; Tabbron & Yang, 1997; King, 1993); and ongoing teacher education training that is designed to adequately prepare lifelong learners. Such policy drivers are often linked to wider global regimes (Hamilton, 2014).

An exploration of student *becoming* in this research undertaking, while considering the 'known' contributory factors, also extends the empirical boundaries into the 'unknown'. Such an approach appears to be uncommon within the TVET HE and further education (FE)

literature where policy texts often fail to adequately recognise difference and diversity in complex neo-liberal systems (Ozga & Jones, 2006). To this end, Haggis (2009) also strongly supports the notion of "stepping into the unknown" (p. 389) by utilising socially responsive approaches if we are serious about supporting all aspects of student learning in complex higher education environments.

1.6 Organisation of the research: structure

Chapter 2 provides a general overview of the literature on *becoming* with particular emphasis on the TVET policy environment. It discusses prevailing attitudes towards TVET globally and locally. It also addresses the current thinking on how the politics of *difference* is understood and even misunderstood within this sector of HE and FE and the resultant impacts on the policy process, especially in micro contexts. The chapter also draws particular attention to specific theoretical frameworks - Gilles Deleuze's (translated by Patton, 1994) work on the phenomena of becoming and difference; and Amartya Sen's (1999, 2005) capability theory, that serve as key reference points in foregrounding the basic arguments of the study. Theoretical framing also helps to identify potential gaps within the TVET HE and FE policy environment in attempting to address the main research questions.

Chapter 3 justifies why the design of the study is heavily focused on the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Approach. Drawing on David Cooperrider's (Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva, 1995) seminal work, the chapter explains why such an approach is desired for a small, but sensitive context such as TVET provision within the HE system of this Caribbean territory. AI's 4D cycle for change focuses on positive aspects of an organisation by taking into consideration its current environment and envisioning future possibilities through the cyclical processes of appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing, and sustaining particular elements.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with LCC tutors, administrators, current and former students as well as findings from officials at the government's ministerial level. The use of a multi-layered approach to questioning provides for a broader understanding of views on the subjects of *becoming* and *difference* and how such voices could ultimately impact the TVET policy process within the HE environment in this Caribbean micro-context. Such an approach also helps in defining the gaps that must be attended to in order to realise change that is adaptable to student *becoming*. Chapter 7 introduces documentary evidence of TVET discourse in this micro-context. Even in presenting the findings, the AI approach serves as useful buffer in analysing certain existing organisational trends while drawing attention to areas where change might be desired from a policy perspective.

Chapter 8 discusses the study's findings in relation to existing literature. Chapter 9 discusses the implications of my research for both practice and theory and offers recommendations that could advance TVET for further education students within a higher education environment. The study also serves as an impetus for other researchers with similar interests in the area of student *becoming* within the TVET environment to pursue further research on related discourses as a way of possibly influencing policy and practice.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the research and its main objectives. My rationale for undertaking this case study was also outlined in addition to how the study's outcomes could possibly contribute to new knowledge. My position as an insider-researcher along with its implications was also discussed. The structure of each chapter is presented and briefly explained.

Chapter 2 presents a very comprehensive review of the extant literature on becoming, difference and capability. While this study is not intended to be a policy study, an

introductory overview of policy and how it informs resultant discourse in TVET is included. The review of the literature is also clearly aligned to the research sub-questions that were introduced in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framing

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents a review of the literature on TVET policy discourses within the HE and FE environment as well as the theoretical premise for this research. The focus on student *becoming* is the central point of this research undertaking as it also serves as a heuristic in understanding the politics of *difference*.

The review closely examines the factors that may influence conceptions of TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro levels by the main actors that are impacted such as policy designers, administrators, tutors and students. It also discusses three possible gaps: i) between the macro, micro and meso levels of the TVET policy environment in HE in the study context; ii) between actual policy discourses and TVET practice within HE in the local context; and iii) the research itself and the policymaking environment. An important consideration in the literature on *becoming* and *difference* is that of the student's voice and how it influences or is influenced by TVET policy discourses in the HE environment.

The ways in which the concepts of *becoming* and *difference* are interpreted is critical in understanding how such views converge on the TVET policy environment within FE and HE and the resultant impacts on students enrolled in such programmes, including their possible futures. Another key objective of the research is to establish whether there are additional gaps between TVET policy and practice, particularly in small contexts in the Caribbean as it relates to *becoming* and *difference.*

2.2 Prevailing attitudes towards TVET globally and locally

Over 20 years ago, Watson (1994) conducted some important research on TVET in developing countries and the influence that Western paradigms had on such locales.

Interestingly, Watson (1994) observed that the countries that had made significant strides in TVET, such as South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, had developed their own strategic and culturally relevant policy approaches that have reaped significant returns. On the other hand, Watson (1994) noted that countries that were shaped by colonial systems of government have struggled in their attempts to raise the profile of TVET. Part of the challenge seems to lie in embedded systems of segregation that have taken root in such societies and have filtered into education systems which form the bedrock of such societies.

2.2.1 Global attitudes

At a global virtual conference to discuss the UNESCO strategy for TVET (UNESCO, 2016) it was agreed that TVET has failed to realise its true potential as it offers poor returns on investments to individuals, businesses and governments since it does not sufficiently contribute to socio-economic development. TVET is also still seen as second best to academic education. To curb these prevailing trends, the conference suggest that the new UNESCO Strategy should promote the quality of TVET programmes; improve socio-economic relationships; promote entrepreneurship and self-employment; and encourage greater community and stakeholder engagement including the effective training of TVET teachers.

Despite the best efforts of governments and agencies in developed countries, especially in the Global North, to underscore the importance of TVET, these efforts are often met with mixed attitudes. For example, a special Eurobarometer on attitudes towards vocational education and training was conducted for the European Commission (TNS Opinion and Social, 2011). The majority of respondents in 19 European countries agree that it is relatively easy for young people who have completed TVET to find jobs. The majority of respondents felt, however, that general and higher education certificates were more highly regarded in their respective countries.

In research done in the Australian context (Fowler, 2017), it was found that the boundaries between TVET and HE are becoming increasingly blurred and confusing. The data revealed that the narrow focus of TVET is creating challenges for its students as they are not as well prepared as HE students for career advancement as both sectors differ significantly in their curriculum offerings. Autobiographical accounts that compare TVET and academic streams in Canada (Sych, 2016), and the USA (Rose, 2014) also reveal that despite ongoing reform initiatives to raise the profile of TVET in these contexts, a divide still exists between them where an academic trajectory is viewed as being superior to a vocational track.

2.2.2 Local attitudes

Since the majority of Caribbean islands were once under British rule, the remnants of colonialism still linger in systems of government. This is also the case with the study context where prevailing attitudes towards TVET are also mixed. For instance, there are several TVET tracks in this school system. They range from the secondary level to HE and FE levels where students can obtain certificates of completion to a more advanced Associate degree for those who possess such aptitudes. Unfortunately, programmes such as the one under study have struggled to find their rightful place within such systems. This was evident when the government of the day outlined its revised plans for the TVET programme a few years ago:

> *"The Academy for Advanced Skills will take the present nine months technical and vocational programme that currently takes place at[Lambert Community College– LCC] and properly develop a curriculum and training programme for young people and adults that seek certification and adequate training in a variety of areas. This skills building institute will be available for both young adults and mature members of the community seeking to gain new skills, sharpen present skills or even retool for existing opportunities in our economy. This institute will help us to spur new entrepreneurs for their participation in our new economy. Subjects that will be considered include mechanical and electrical engineering, drafting, computer science, office and document management and culinary arts*"(NDP Manifesto,2015, p.41).

Despite government's best intentions, there is still a significant number of young persons across the territory that feel marginalized as a result of not being able to access a higher

level of education, due to systemic restrictions or individual differences, to make them employable in certain career pathways. This is due, in part, to the traditionally held views of TVET as being of a lesser value than other academic courses. What also seems clear is that the language of TVET discourse in this context helps to compound matters. In the case of the mandate alluded to above, it took the government about nine years to realize that the curriculum for this particular TVET programme needed a fresh approach to its delivery. Again this speaks to the generally prevailing attitudes about TVET not being as important as it should be hence the importance of a study such as this that addresses many of these critical issues.

A comparison of global and local attitudes reveal that there are some common challenges that must be overcome if TVET is to become a study path of choice that is not considered second best. The global and local contextual examples clearly show that even thosegovernments around the world that are committed to the transformation of education systems also inadvertently tend to reinforce the status quo (Simmons and Thomson, 2013). This is evident in theminimal provisions that are made for young people that are neither in employment, education or training (NEET) through TVET. Simmons & Thomson (2013) further caution that governmental agencies have a socio-economic responsibility to curb youth disengagement by creating education systems that allow young people to feel a sense of connectivity to society.

2.3Factorsthat shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro levels

Research into the policy-making world particularly in HE and FE could be complex at best as it fuses various levels of governance at administrative and political levels (Gornitzka, 2013). These are the sites where multiple actors converge in the macro, meso and micro environments such as what this research into LCC aims to accomplish. Teichler (2003) sees a complementary relationship between policy, research and practice in HE that could reap benefits for “future-conscious researchers” depending on the thematic focus.

At the macro level, educational policy is often viewed through different lenses depending on how it is appropriated. For example, as a tool for building power (Levinson et al., 2009; Conner et al., 2012) and politics (Piazza, 2014); as a problem solving mechanism (Webb (2014); and as a strategy for lifelong learning (Cort, 2008). More poignantly, Taylor (2004) suggests that any attempt to analyse policy must also take into consideration the interrelationships between texts, cultures, structures and relations that are all key determinants in policy objectives and policy outcomes. Many of these interrelationships occur at the meso or administrative level and at the micro level that includes teachers and students. Oftentimes, though, such voices are silent in the policy process which underscores Bernstein's (2003) appeal for a policy recontextualisation in such contexts.

Macfarlane's (2012) higher education research archipelago paints a very useful picture of the many competing variables that exist in the teaching/learning, research and policy environment on many higher education campuses today, such as LCC. Such a depiction seems to align with Teichler's (2003) observation of crowded spaces in higher education. In Macfarlane's (2012) map, policy seems to concentrate on the big picture view of areas such as globalisation, marketisation, internationalisation, employment and economics.

While the distinctions between community colleges, further education colleges and four-year colleges are not clearly demarcated on this map, it could be inferred that such a graphical representation may be more suited to four-year traditional HE institutions as opposed to a TVET further education programme operating within a community college environment. This further explains why policies that may apply to programmes such as the TVET at LCC may not be as highly regarded in a culture that has traditionally focused on mainstream academic systems of teaching and learning that has ultimately influenced existing discourses as well.

From a social justice perspective, a 'becoming' policy framework consideration must also consider gendered roles, class and power relations under which TVET learning may occur for the student (Colley et al., 2003). Such factors could significantly impact policy outcomes and lead to even wider margins of social inequality particularly for the student. At the

other end of this continuum, Sen (2005) argues that issues related to individual freedoms and opportunities are more linked to human rights perspectives and capabilities and that it is virtually impossible to consider one without the other.

Amartya Sen (b. 1933) is a 20th/21st century post-modern economist and philosopher whose work in human development and social justice laid the cornerstones for the creation of his widely known capability theory. The capability approach focuses on human functionings in the world and how such functionings are achieved. Central to Sen's school of thought is the dual role that freedom plays:

> *"Having freedom to do the things one has reason to value is (1) significant in itself for the person's overall freedom, and (2) important in fostering the person's opportunity to have valuable outcomes"* (Sen, 1999, p. 18).

In later writings, Sen (2005) makes an even stronger argument for the capability approach by linking it directly to one's human rights. In his considered view, this inextricable linkage is made possible through opportunities that must be created to express individual freedoms at all levels of society as a matter of basic ethical reasoning.

Sen's (2005) capability approach is explored further in this case study as a theoretical window from which to interpret concepts of difference and becoming. One could argue that the extent to which a student is capable or not invariably depends on how difference is perceived which could then impact his or her 'becoming'.

As White (1994) posits, there are a multiplicity of arguments and schools of thoughts about various aspects of policy that may converge on our daily lives. These factors ultimately shape policy discourses in public spaces such as HE and FE. The placement of TVET programmes and policies within a higher education setting, such as the model that currently obtains at LCC, is seemingly even more complex when attempting to place both systems under one umbrella of learning and *becoming,* while at the same time considering the politics of the macro, meso and micro environments. In such situations, O'Shea et al. (2012) has found that vocational students may "struggle for validation on their own terms" (p. 272) as their successes may inadvertently be linked to the wider group.

Within technical vocational education and training (TVET) policy discourses at the tertiary level, the concept of student *becoming* appears to be a relatively under-researched phenomenon within the wider framework of this discipline (Barnett, 2009; Bernstein, 2003; Grubb, 2006). This gap is even more noticeable within micro contexts such as the Caribbean higher education system where the focus on TVET is also largely skills-based for employability purposes. Despite the best efforts of country governments, attrition rates among young people in such programmes continue to be quite high for a multiplicity of reasons. These are known facts that have not influenced TVET policy in HE and FE for the better. As a qualitative researcher I am interested in finding ways to bridge gaps between the known and the unknown factors that could help young people in Caribbean communities to live more productive lives.

As Lather (2009) posits, qualitative researchers have a responsibility to embrace unknowingnessand *becoming*:

> *"It is the thought that has been unthinkable for some time that might now be made visible in the name of quality assurance: accountable to complexity, multiplicity, becoming, difference, the yes that comes from working the stuck places, the beyond that is in what haunts"*(Lather, 2009, p. 351).

2.4Towards an ontology of becoming

The concept of *becoming,* though not widely used in educational circles, has been in existence for centuries. More recently,Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), an influential 20th century French philosopher, extended the thinking on this construct by building on the work of Henri Bergson. These are chronicled in his literary works *Difference and Repetition* and *Bergsonism.*

According to Weinbaum (2015) the central tenets of a Deleuzian ontological construct theorises that:

1. Immanence is seen in stark contrast to transcendental thought.
2. Difference is considered as a critical ontological element instead of identity.

3. Multiple reference points are embraced as opposed to static ideas.
4. Becoming as a process of individuation replaces the concept of being.

In the Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy, much emphasis is placed on transcendental versus immanent thought. Transcendence is being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge whereas immanence is being within the limits of possible experience or knowledge. In his essays on *Pure Immanence*, Deleuze (1965) is very deliberate in propounding the significance of immanence to life and ultimately to one's becoming. On such a plane, possible states of knowledge can be measured through the actualisation of objects and subjects through lived events.

Thiele (2016) extends Deleuze's thoughts on immanence to include concepts of difference and the process of becoming. Thiele (2016) views immanence as a plane on which different patterns of becoming reveal themselves "Becoming is that which incarnates, actualises and expresses immanence, yet without having any priority over it" (p. 123).

Figure 1 below clearly illustrates how competing schools of thought may converge on learning environments such as LCC in presenting a possible becoming framework. It is my experience that LCC's systems of operation tend to follow a pre-modern/modern trajectory. For the most part policies and programmes are usually based on identifiable targets that may inadvertently promote static conceptual notions of difference as a result of transcendental views. If a becoming policy is to be effectively realised, a paradigm shift must also take place along such a plane of convergence between the modernist and post-modernist views of thinking about such provisions within complex systems such as FE and HE. Simply put, the key to a becoming ontology lies in the value that is placed on individual lives, recognising that difference gives blood to immanent processes of becoming that continually reinvent themselves.

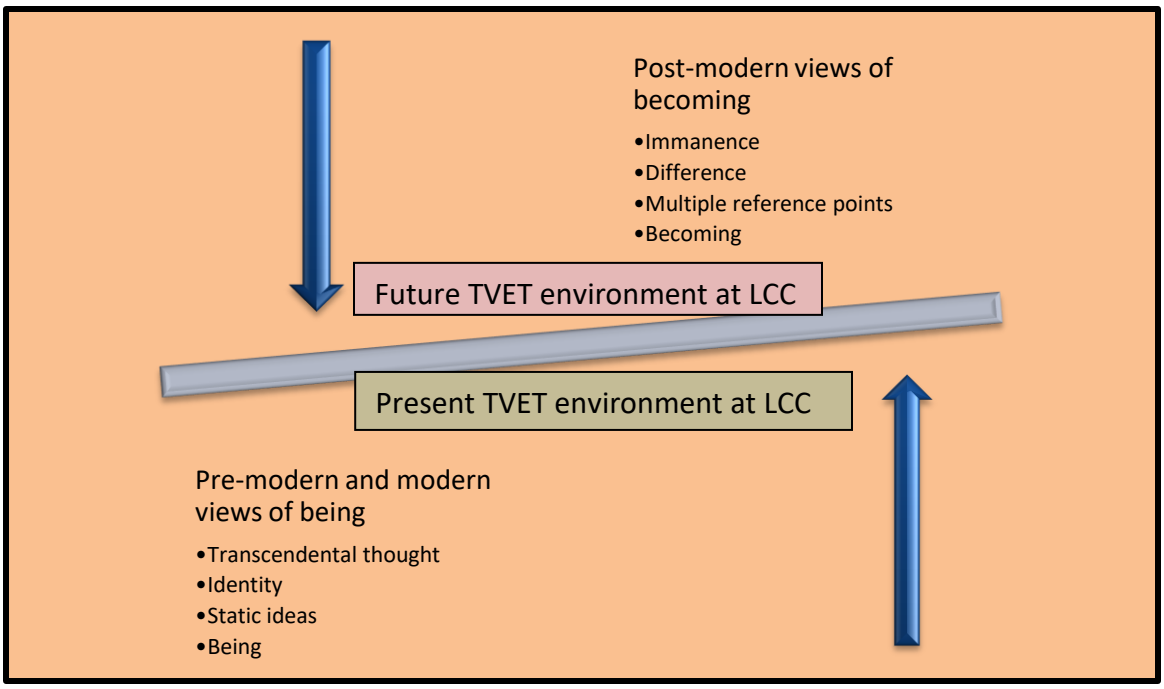

Figure 1 – Comparative view of pre-modernist, modernist and post-modernist thoughts

Grosz (2005) draws heavily on Bergson's and Deleuze's views in conceptualising becoming as an emergent quality within a particular system out of which difference is born. A key factor in this process is the period of duration when the past and present is reconciled, or the "unbecoming of becoming" (p. 4), to usher in new beginnings. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) refer to such transformations as necessary "thresholds and doors" on the journey of becoming "depending on the hour of the world, the circles of hell, or the stages of the journey that sets scales, forms, and cries in variation" (p. 249). Such an interpretation suggests that the process of becoming is more iterative than it is linear in creating a multiplicity of symbiotic pathways and relationships.

2.5 Interpreting student *becoming* within the local context

At the macro level, applying a *becoming* approach to TVET HE policy environment is a relatively new phenomenon in the Caribbean education system. The *modus operandi* in this micro context aligns the concept of *difference* with student identity and academic capability or lack thereof. To this end, educational policies have historically focused on grouping such

students in skill development or special education programmes to make them employable and even marginally functional in society. This systemic view contrasts with Hillier's (2005) view of creating multiple opportunities within a framework for the emergence of several identities and possibilities. For such reasons, among others, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call for a "new threshold of deterritorialisation" (p. 308) through the becoming school of thought that recognises differences in perspectives and human capacities that are not bound to systemic assemblages.

It must be noted that even within such frameworks as suggested by Hillier (2005) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) varying interpretations exist in determining the most effective provisions within a *becoming* TVET policy, for example, that also embeds *difference* in its design and execution. In certain settings, the word 'becoming' may not even be used, but its intent may be quite evident, particularly from a capability perspective. For instance, Watts and Bridges (2006), drawing on Sen's (1985, 1992, 1993, 1999) capability theory, hold similar stances on the need to create spaces where those that choose to participate, or even not participate in HE and FE, could still thrive in a society that is adaptable enough to allow for the existence of plural systems of human becoming.

At the meso level, Barnett (2009) posits that if a higher education curriculum is designed to promote student engagement and development, such a curriculum must also serve as an avenue or vehicle to facilitate student *becoming*. Barnett (2009) further theorises that the relationship between knowledge and *becoming* should not only serve the present but other epistemic, empirical, philosophical and ontological virtues and relationships. In Barnett's (2009) considered view, the link between knowledge and a student's becoming could be quite complex as it could impact certain fields of study and disciplines such as vocational studies in different ways based on the weights and qualities that are assigned to certain phenomena.

In attempting to compare the local TVET context in HE and FE to other similar models, it was proving somewhat challenging to locate a similar framework within the Caribbean region as most TVET training programmes are delivered within a technical environment

and not a community college. The same seems to hold true for European TVET training as well. The challenge becomes even more acute it appears when attempting to identify such an arrangement within a *becoming* framework.

A detailed review of the literature has yielded seemingly very few studies on the successful coupling of TVET programmes in a HE or even further education environment within a framework of *becoming*. One such study was conducted by Colley et al. (2003) of the UK further education environment that drew on three vocational courses in childcare, healthcare and engineering. The authors argued in their findings that "learning is a process of becoming" that is closely linked to one's "vocational habitus" (p. 471). In the authors' concluding statements of the case study findings, they emphasised that learning as a process of becoming must transcend certain social, cultural and emotional boundaries that influence curricula whether formally or informally. It was further noted that the becoming process must also be characterised not only through the acquisition of technical skills, as is often the case in TVET programmes, but to seek forms of engagement at all levels that will transform the lives of young people beyond the college environment.

In the medical field, particularly in nursing, a becoming theory known as humanbecoming (Parse, 2003) is seemingly gaining some attention and even acceptance. Humanbecoming (one word) is an emergent thinking about life quality that is based on the premise that individuals have a voice in writing their own histories of their own becomingin the present moment. Such actions allow for freedom of movement and limitless possibilities in constructing individual qualities of living (Parse, 2013). A comparison of the medical field to the field of education where a humanbecoming theory is concerned could possibly yield some useful insights. For instance, the ideology of an emergent view of human being within a world of boundless possibilities for expression aligns closely with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) thinking on the need to break with traditionally closed systems in recognising the continuously transforming phenomena of becoming and difference.

In acknowledging the politics of a becoming philosophy, Pearce et al. (2012) speak of the dilemmas teachers and educators are faced with at the micro level in addressing current

educational discourses within certain contexts. Such discourses as subjectivity and difference; power and language; time and space; the experiences of actors; and reconciling the old with the new – all play out on the tapestry of becoming. In the final analysis, Pearce et al. (2012) agree that the only question that could be asked is, "What becomes?" (p. 425).

2.6Understanding existing TVET policy within a becoming framework

In a report on the state of special education in this Caribbean territory, Alexander & Dawson(2004) opined that much human and physical resources may be required if special educational arrangements such as technical schools are to realise any meaningful gains in student skill development.

Alexander and Dawson's (2004) findings have not shifted significantly over the past decade. For the most part, the majority of students that are enrolled in vocational fields also require special education support. While such policies were intended to help students to overcome certain academic disadvantages, such discourses may also hinder their overall becoming based on the negative perceptions about 'difference' that tend to surround the delivery of such programmes in the local context. Figure 2 illustrates what currently obtains in this Caribbean context:

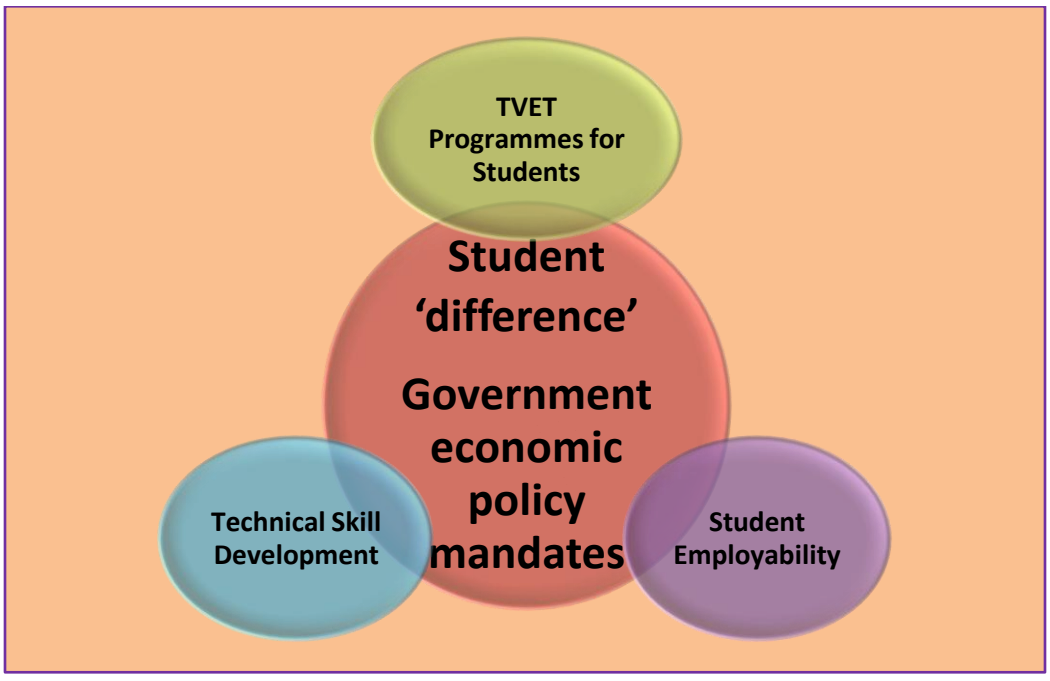

Figure2 - Current diagrammatical view of TVET at LCC

In a later report on this education system that also closely examined special education and vocational education, Hopkins (2010) suggested that "[this country] will gain by moving to a more proactive model that will benefit both students with and without disabilities" (p. 19). While Hopkins (2010) was not very specific, the report pointed to the need for a transformative, systemic approach that was inclusive of all learners.

One of the challenges that may impede a transformative approach such as a becoming philosophy within the local context is its close ties to existing regional bodies such as CARICOM (Caribbean Community) and the OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States) that have developed their own strategies for the advancement of vocational education and, by extension, higher education. Such strategies are often used as benchmarks in local member contexts. Bullen et al. (2004) caution against the pressure to develop higher education policies based on emergent global trends that have a narrow techno-economic focus. Instead Bullen et al. (2004) posit that alternative theoretical positions should be developed that pay closer attention to the nuances between the "economy and society and structure and agency" (p. 10).

There is a systemic effect of globalisation on educational policy structures that may recognise the risk of social exclusion in certain discourses on one hand, but also tend to rely on "restricted forms of evidence" about "social capital, about life chances and pathways, about access to employment, about changing economies and institutions that could be transferred into the making and assessment of policy in education" (Ozga and Jones (2006) citing Luke 2003, p. 3). This correlates to recent discourses by global agencies such as UNESCO (2015) that have signalled the need to rethink educational strategies particularly in the area of policy making in the Global North and South to make such systems more integrative of alternative, diversified lived realities that embrace universal core values. Such discourses present excellent platforms for exploring little understood conceptions such as student *becoming* within a HE and FE environment.

The overarching framing of education policy structures in my context and by extension LCC is largely enshrined in its Education Act (2004). Section 111 of the Act speaks to the provision of vocational education as follows:

"111. *In respect of vocational education, the permit to establish a private school shall specify, where it concerns –*

(a) secondary school instructional services in vocational education or adult vocational education, the vocational education programmes that the school is authorised to dispense;

(b) supplementary vocational training, the fields for which the permit is granted; or

(c) general or vocational education at the tertiary level, the programmes that the school is authorised to dispense" (p. 74).

It seems clear from the provisions of the country's Education Act (2004) that emphasis is mostly placed on training sites but not specifically on the scope of programme delivery at the various levels or on training outcomes. It is also evident that such legal framing has placed institutions and structures at its core but not necessarily agency. Gordon Allport (1955), one of the few 20th Century proponents of a becoming theory, spoke of the role that structures should play:

> *"It is the unfinished structure that has the dynamic power. A finished structure is static; but a growing structure, tending toward a given direction of closure, has the capacity to subsidiate and guide conduct in conformity with its movement* (p. 91)."

In other words, the extent to which structures are viewed as dominant features of a becoming framework could, in fact, hinder its development.

While the study'scontext is relatively young in its provision of vocational education at secondary and tertiary levels, parallels could be drawn from other countries such as Scotland on the possible development and implementation of a philosophical legal framework that is built on a futuristic becoming ontology. Such an illustration is provided in Figure 3which would be a significant departure from the illustration in Figure 2 that places difference rather than becoming at its core.

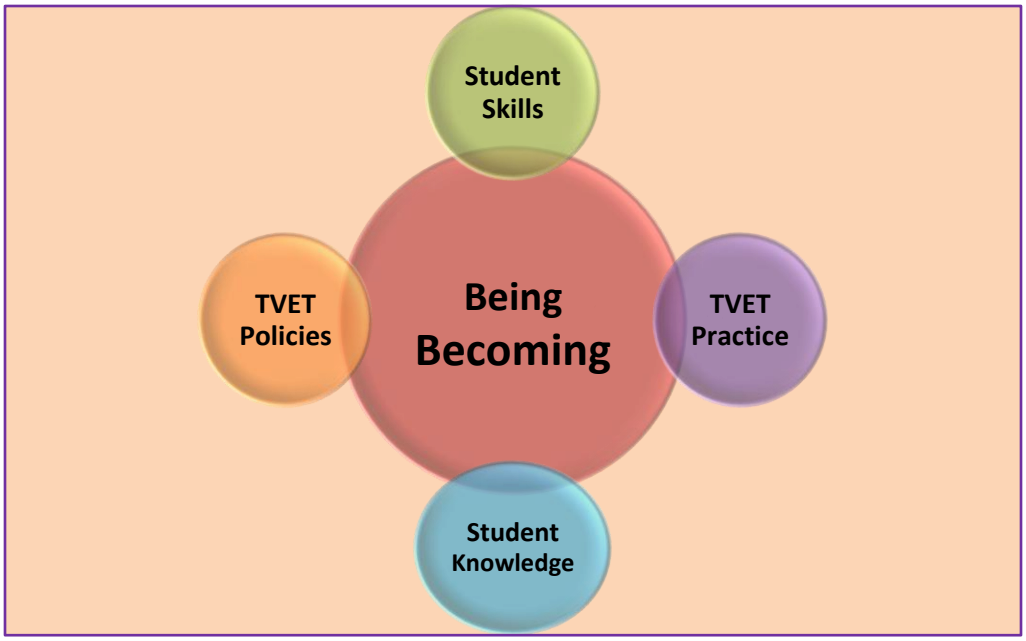

Figure3– Proposed diagrammatical view of TVET at LCC

Many countries have been seemingly slow to enshrine a *becoming* philosophy within their educational policy environment with the exception of jurisdictions like Scotland where educational designers have recently redesigned aspects of their policy framework to include *Learning for Sustainability (LfS)* within a *becoming* philosophy (Clarke & Mcphie, 2015). This rather novel approach embraces the tenets of a Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming ontology. It reconceptualises teaching/learning spaces and the individuals within those spaces along a plane of immanence that challenges the largely status quo structures of the world.

It might be virtually impossible to transform an entire educational system on the premise of a *becoming* ontology; rather, a concentration on certain core elements could reap significant benefits (Clarke and Mcphie, 2015). While the Scottish model of becoming policy was mostly concentrated on environmental education, lessons could still be learnt for a becoming policy within TVET as it explores avenues for creative forms of expression in the policy and learning environment as well as ways to question existing practice.

2.7. Interpreting*difference* within the local HE context

Increasingly, the higher education environment is viewed as a site of conflict between the promotion of economic capital and social capital (Watts & Bridges, 2006; Avis, 2012) largely due to the effects of globalisation (Dodds, 2008) with differing global implications for policy and practice in vocational education and training (Paes de Carvalho, 2012; Crossman & Cameron, 2014).

Pierre Bourdieu's field theory offers an explanation of this complex series of relationships (Naidoo, 2004). In Bourdieu's view, HE straddles the divide between socio-political and economic forces that could inadvertently lead to social stratification and difference as is often evident within a TVET environment (Watson, 1994). For such reasons, King and Palmer (2010) argue that it is important for educational planners to be aware of the extent to which certain marginalised and vulnerable groups may access such systems.

The policy argument that is often put forward by designers in a TVET environment seems one-sided. They argue that such structures are implemented 'for' students that are in need of such programmes to even marginally function in life, mostly without their involvement (Könings et al., 2005). An alternative to this systemic issueis a model that combines the perspectives of educational designers, teachers and students, the Combination-of-perspectives (COOP) model, to effectively navigate 'powerful learning environments' in the 21st Century (Könings et al., 2005).

The COOP model appears to be a useful tool that could harness perceptions and even differences of policy actors within a learning environment. Whether such a model could work in the context under study is debatable as the current policy model is more top-down from the macro level than it is collaborative to include meso and micro levels.

2.8 Understanding *difference* within existing policy discourses

Recent discourses have attempted to link vocational education and higher education continuum by placing such relationships on four tiers: "political, economics, epistemological and human development" (Maclean & Pavlova, 2011, p. 329). In fact, their research has acknowledged the close linkages that are now developing between the two systems and the resultant opportunities that exist for the "repositioning of the individual and his/her actions in the centre of the educational process" (p. 329). While the words, *becoming* and *difference,* are not explicitly stated by Maclean and Pavlova (2011), the human development perspective could help to galvanise such efforts.

Trying to promote a TVET policy within an HE environment on the premise of differentiation appears to be somewhat problematic for policy designers particularly as such approaches may be layered with various conceptions about how the subject of *difference* should be addressed at the micro, meso and macro levels (for example Gellert & Rau, 1992; Grubb, 2006; O'Shea et al.; 2012). As Spöttl (2013) posits, the extent of the permeability factor –whether vertically or horizontally – of TVET within a HE framework must be carefully considered as such structures could present opportunities as well as challenges for system designers. For such reasons, most educational systems have opted to keep them separate.

The TVET programme under study has seemingly struggledin many areas to find its rightful space and place. Such situations are further compounded by the language of policy discourses that are used to define such student populations and programmes. For example, teRiele (2006) notes the term 'at risk' that may be often used to refer to Australian young people who may not have completed secondary education and are likely not to pursue higher education. In another research report, Smyth and McInerney (2013) refer to narrative portraits of 'disadvantaged young people'. Riele (2006) argues that such terminologies could lead to further marginalisation of such students.

Rather than focusing on seemingly negative discourses to define education policy, Sellar (2015) prefers to focus on the positive. For example, instead of referring to the wasted potential of young people, designers are challenged to instead use the word potential as a key cornerstone of policy framing that draws heavily on the work of Gilles Deleuze.

In expounding on the notions of difference within the higher education environment, Burke (2015) acknowledges the politics of misrecognition that exists across the spectrum of student engagement and calls for concept of difference to be re-imagined "not as a problem to be regulated….but as a critical resource to reflexively develop collective and ethical participation in pedagogical spaces" (p. 400). In other words, a nuanced and balanced approach to the understanding of difference within a HE context could help in replacing fear that Webb & Gulson (2012) refer to as policy apparitions (p. 87) that could ultimately inder becoming-policies. For such reasons Ball (1997),citing Reay(1991), Gillborn(1995)and Troyna et al.(1993), stresses the need to think about the voices of persons or actors that inhabit the texts of policy in attempting to decipher the many complex layers of issues.

2.9Identifying the gaps in TVET policy discourses in HE and practice

An obvious gap between the macro and micro environments in vocationalism exists (Bernstein, 2003). At the macro level emphasis is placed on corporate mergers and growth; at the micro level the focus is largely skills-based training for entrepreneurship opportunities. Though not made explicit, the meso or institutional level is an important site where such ideologies converge and should therefore play a key role in policy recontextualisation (Jephcote & Davies, 2004). Understanding how these gaps ultimately impact the TVET environment is a critical component in exploring concepts of *becoming* and *difference* and likely resultant implications.

For example, Burke (2015)acknowledges that the concept of *difference* is connected to the politics of misrecognition that could diminish individual possibilities and capacities. While Burke (2015) suggests the importance of embracing "the dynamics of difference" (p. 388)

that encourages connectivity and belonging to guide practice, no concrete connections are made to the educational policy environment.

Understanding how various facets related to the concept of *becoming* and *difference* within educational settings are linked to policy discourses and related overarching outcomes is an area that could benefit from further research. For example Masny (2013) links the politics of *becoming* to a Multiple Literacies Theory (MLT) using Deleuzian concepts that seek to transcend experience. In this regard, credence is given to how such experiential connections could facilitate a process of *becoming* that is not based on empirical assumptions but uses the virtual to produce the actual. Other researchers stress the affective and philosophical aspects of *becoming* (for example Semetsky, 2011; Clarke & Mcphie, 2015).

Following Deleuze's argument for a new model of 'experiential pedagogy' (p. 138), Semetsky (2011) sees merit in the revolutionary prospects of a becoming ontology in educational philosophy that embraces lifelong learning opportunities through continuous assessments; transcends time and space; and understands the temporality of structures and institutions whose main purpose should be to "transcode passage from one milieu to another" thus creating a "new plane of existence" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 313-314) for one's becoming.

It is also instructive to note Todd May's (2003) perspectives on how a Deleuzian becoming could open one's understanding of difference and acceptance of difference:

> *"A necessarily communicating world: a world of difference, anonymous and productive, beneath and within the perceptible world of identities. To arrive at this world is to affirm difference. To conclude, then, the concept of becoming and of becomings are rooted in a philosophical perspective whose goal is to overturn philosophy's traditional "dogmatic image of thought" and to open up new pathways down which thinking and living can travel. These concepts do not ask of us our epistemic consent; indeed they ask nothing of us. Rather, they are offerings, offerings of ways to think, and ultimately to act, in a world that oppresses us with its identities. If they work – and for Deleuze, the ultimate criterion for the success of a concept is that it works – it will not be because we believe in them but because they move us in the direction of possibilities that had before been beyond our ken. Otherwise put, if*

> *the concepts of becoming and of becomings work, it will be because they expose us to the interesting, the remarkable, and the important."* (p. 151).

May's (2003) conceptual framework goes to the core of this case study which explored how a becoming ontology could effectively introduce other, possibly more dynamic, ways of seeing difference and in the process even re-writing institutional policy frameworks in TVET for the greater societal good

It is evident from the existing literature to-date that TVET research undertakings tend to focus on the economic viability of TVET programmes and to a lesser extent on their social viability depending on which agency is driving such change efforts. The issue becomes even more acute within the context of HE and FE. For example Maclean (2007) alludes to the challenges of harmonising TVET relationships within a traditional HE setting. Such challenges seem even more acute within the Caribbean context, where this study is based. For the most part, TVET serves students who are perceived to be academically challenged, which is really a myth, as a result the relevance of TVET to HE is often questioned. Instead of placing students in a TVET 'box' and training them for workplace production, more attention should given to their "personal needs, aspirations and democratic rights" (Subran, 2013).This is gap that a becoming policy framework seeks to address.

Another important gap is that of the students' voice. Hamilton (2014) argues that important audiences could be inadvertently overlooked under the guises of certain policy discourses. One such important audience is that of the student voice. Singh et al. (2013) speak to the vital roles that actors must play at all levels in shaping discursive practices in educational settings. According to Singh et al. (2013), such practices should not only focus on real or concrete ways of meaning making but also imagined states of being for teachers, students and the school context in general. A major factor at play here though is the shaping of one's identity through such practices. To this end, Colley et al. (2003) argue that viewing learning through the lenses of a becoming ontology is a useful vehicle to consider within the TVET environment as it not only considers the economics of learning

> *".....but also "social, cultural and emotional aspects, its unwritten and hidden curricula, and go beyond explanations related to prescribed curricula, and the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge"* (p. 493).

Lastly, Plank (2011) makes an important observation about a possible gap that could exist between research and policymaking where the expectations of policy makers and researchers may differ. In attempting to close such a gap, Plank (2011) suggests the need for "striking a balance" (p. 25) so as not to compromise the integrity of the research process. This observation is an important consideration for conducting research in such a small contexts where many of the research subjects may be known to each other. In so doing, it is critical to always maintain an objective stance so as not to compromise any ethical issues that may arise.

2.10The student's voice in policy discourses about *becoming* and *difference*

Involving student voices in the policy process seems to be a rather uncommon phenomenon in certain contexts. This may even be true in the study's contextand other similar locales in the Caribbean region. A comparison of various educational contexts in the literature reveals that there is a place for voices to be heard in policy formation other than political policy actors. For instance Ball (2013) calls for an increased participatory approach that involves parents and communities in the planning process. In an earlier paper, Ball (1997) was careful to point out that research into the peculiarities of policy will reveal that it is largely relational to the cultural and socio-political landscape against which it is placed. In other words what may work in one context may not necessarily work in another. While this thesis is not intended to be a full policy study, such variances are still noteworthy when drawing particular conclusions.

In conducting research on the youth experience in the*Becoming Educated*studyin Victoria, Australia, Smyth and Hewitson (2014) used the term 'shape shifters' in acknowledging the importance of their voices. What their research revealed was when students were given opportunities to become involved in policy decisions that impacted them, they felt more connected to such processes and responded more positively to change. In another research

report that focused more on the higher education environment, Smyth & McInerney (2013) propose an advocacy approach on behalf young people through portraiture techniques that will allow their voices to be heard in more stifling policy regimes.

In ensuring a space for young people, Ryan (2011) proposes a contrasting social justice approach that encourages civic participation of young people in university policy processes. Ryan (2011) sees such approach as being more impactful on students' lived practices as they are able to find ways to create their own spaces through important forms of personal engagement that they find relatable.

While Ryan's (2011) views may seem plausible to the average university student, individuals from a vocational background may face certain challenges in creating a space for their voices to be heard as such students may not be considered mainstream enough to be acknowledged within policy frameworks. To this end, O'Shea et al. (2012) found that students who transition from vocational settings to a higher education environment may even be viewed with a certain level of suspicionas they may be perceived as being deficient in certain knowledge spheres and therefore lacking the capacity to contribute to policy processes. This is where the notions of *becoming* and *difference* become apparent and even complex. In response to such dilemmas, Colley et al. (2003) promote the concept of vocational habitus (p. 471) where learning is viewed as a process of *becoming* that teaches the development of sense and sensibility through the creation of avenues for students to respond in such environments.

There is need for a "post/structural re/working of difference" (Burke, 2015, p. 400)that diminishes elements of fear, standardisation of practices and power and promotes creative ways for student engagement through difference. As Foucault and Miskowiec (1986) posit "the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space" (p. 23). In other words, there are enough opportunities for a variety of voices to be heard within particular spaces such as education policy environments.

The argument then follows as to whether students, particularly those in vocational higher education, are capable of effectively contributing to policy change. To this end, Clark (2005), using Sen's capability approach, proffers that creating an appropriate space for human well-being should be contingent upon the creation of opportunities for freedom. As Thomson and Holdsworth (2003) argue in their research on student participation, "when free and autonomous policy agents know what they are doing, they can shift institutional structures and habituated ways of doing and being." (p. 371). Put another way, paradigmatic shifts in key policy areas could be most effective if participants are provided with more creative avenues for individual expression in learning environments that facilitate their becoming. As Barnett (2009) contends, "unless the student develops her (or his) voice and has a willingness to speak, her (or his) becoming may be unduly limited" (pp. 435-436)

Comparatively speaking, contexts such as Trinidad and Tobago, in the Caribbean Region, are making significant strides to address this anomaly in the policy process. For instance, included within the country's policy document on HE and TVET that was published in 2010, the importance of the student voice was noted: "…..governance and management of tertiary education and TVET at both the system and institutional levels must accord more importance to the student voice in involvement and decision-making" (p. 33). The policy designers in this country also recognize the importance of having such mandates enshrined in the country's Education Act as a way of ensuring the necessary legal framing. These are valuable lessons that could possibly be adapted to this research context.

In considering the student voice phenomenon, Bragg (2007) also draws attention to the complexities that could characterise such an approach to the policy process. To this end, Bragg (2007) argues that while the student voice is now assuming more dominance in educational policy in the UK at the micro level, at the meso level new hierarchical structures may be developed as vanguards that could further alienate. As a result, care should be taken to understand the texts and even sub-texts of emergent policy discourses about the student voice that may ultimately be counter-productive.

2.11Ontological foundation for the study

The ontological approach for this study is two-dimensional as it largely draws on the works of 20th century French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (translated by Patton, 1994) on the ontology of *becoming* and *difference.* Deleuze was heavily influenced by Henri Bergson's (Grosz, 2005) philosophical views on *becoming* and further developed the concept to show how the phenomena of *difference* plays a significant role in such ontological perspectives. The overarching capability theory of Amartya Sen (1999, 2005) serves to galvanise both concepts in response to the study's thesis and related sub-questions

Grosz (2005) effectively compares and contrasts the works of Bergson and Deleuze in noting that both seek an understanding of the real (p. 11) through processes of becoming and difference:

> *"It is because the real is construed as fundamentally dynamic, complex, open-ended, because becoming, which is to say, difference, must be attributed to it in every element that it cannot begin to become, it does not acquire virtuality but is always in flux"* (pp. 11-12).

In framing the theoretical component of this study, several schools of thought were considered. Central to this process was the need to align the study's focal areas of becoming and difference, with theoretical perspectives that would not only add to the knowledge base on further education TVET programmes administered within a HE policy environment, but also speak to the need to view capability as a necessary variable in this equation. Consequentially, I was drawn to the philosophical and theoretical persuasions of Deleuze and Sen since both are primarily concerned with human functionings in the world and how they could be maximised for the greater good. More poignantly I see much merit in the points at which their theoretical constructs converge in such important areas as having the freedom of choice to become. Such concepts are well suited for the TVET environment that places a high emphasis on human development but more traditionally from a skills-based level. For these reasons, I have made a deliberate attempt to link these

related fields in establishing naturally causational relationships that could even redefine TVET policy discourses within the FE and HE context.

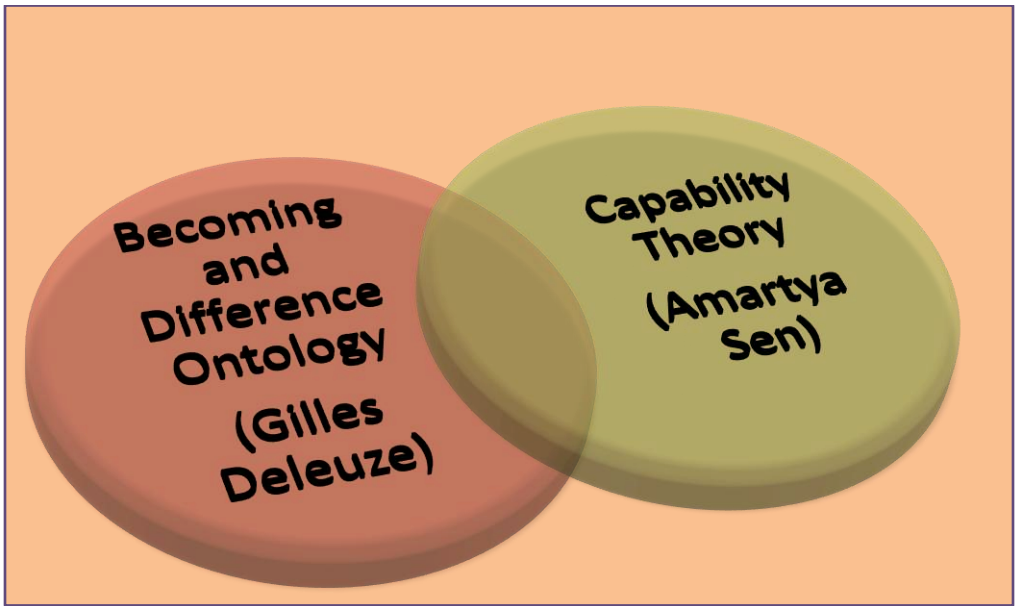

Figure 4– Theoretical Framing – Deleuze and Sen

2.11.1 Gilles Deleuze

Deleuze (1994) makes several noteworthy points about the philosophy of difference. For instance, difference is a state of determination that is made. It is often portrayed negatively as a result of how the concept is represented in the world through systemic structures. For such reasons, Deleuze argues that "difference must leave its cave and cease to be a monster" (29).

Deleuze's theory of difference places it on a more positive trajectory of virtual possibilities. For instance, difference can exist in harmony with other phenomena and that it is the essence of one's being with its own self-mediated qualities. Conversely, Deleuze (1994) also laments about the conundrum in which difference naturally finds itself when it is operationalised within a becoming environment. "It is thus the nature of genera to remain

themselves while becoming other in the differences which divide them" (p. 31). In other words, the core or essence of human being does not change even in the face of oppositional forces of difference that may contradict this naturally occurring tendency.

This line of thinking is significant as it possibly explains why many systems, policies and programmes, such as TVET for example, that are created to address the issue of academic 'difference'are not often successful in realising sustained change over the longer term. It would therefore seem that the corollary to Deleuze's theory of difference would be to align the concept of becoming along the same plane (Bateson, 1987; Hillier, 2005) where the concepts work in congruence with each other for the greater human good.

Colebrook (2002) unpacks Deleuze's philosophical thoughts on difference and becoming in a language that is easily understood and insightful. For example, Colebrook (2002) notes that Deleuze sees difference as being eternal which means that it does not change through time but that it has the power to produce new forms – the multiplicity effect. It could reasonably be argued then, that if the concept of difference is viewed as continuously evolving, this also opens avenues for our becomings in ways that may not be predestined. In a Deleuzean frame of thought, Colebrook (2002) posits that the quality of life enhances "through maximum encounters" (p. 133) which are often woven through the various strands of difference. On the other hand, restricting opportunities for becoming can have the reverse effect in limiting human possibilities or capabilities.

Central to Deleuze's philosophical thought is the role that immanence plays. Deleuze sees immanence as the meaning of life that is further given form through individuation, subjects, objects and events. Deleuze also sees life as an indefinite phenomenon that unfolds between times and moments and spaces and places. In his essay on *Pure Immanence,* Deleuze describes such an individual life as being concerned with the impersonal and free from the "accidents of internal and external life that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens" (p. 78). In other words, becoming could be described as the incarnation or actualisation of immanence in a way that brings it to life (Thiele, 2016).

For purposes of this case study, while Deleuze's thinking about becoming and difference may not be a perfect philosophical science it does offer an alternative view about how these concepts are viewed in the world. More poignant is the emphasis Deleuze places on the peeling away of internal and external barriers that may inhibit limitless possibilities for becoming through determination.

2.11.2 Amartya Sen

Robeyns (2003) provides a very comprehensive interpretation of Sen's capability approach by highlighting some salient points:

1. A core characteristic is its focus on people's capabilities compared to other approaches that focus on well-being and justice.
2. The importance of removing obstacles from people's lives so that they are free to choose to be whom they want to be and to do what they want to do.
3. The approach allows for spaces between functionings and capabilities where diversity can thrive despite socio-economic and other personal factors.

In acknowledging critics of the capability approach, Robeyns (2003) notes questions that are often asked such as whether the approach is too individualistic; whether it encourages the development of inappropriate policies and the role that social power could play in such interactions. In the final analysis, Robeyns (2003) agrees that various elements of the capability approach are still being refined as it evolves into a more mature paradigm. Despite some areas of concern, Robeyns (2003) insists that the "capability approach speaks to many people's hearts and minds." (p. 54) including mine.

Sen's work is widely regarded in different disciplines that span the gamut from economics and social welfare to education. The idea of one's capacity or capability to achieve is pivotal to this research undertaking and forms the overarching framework from which difference and becoming could be better appreciated. From an historical perspective, it could be inferred that students of 'limited capacity or capability' academically are often placed in technical programmes, such as the one under study at LCC, to 'learn a skill' to

make them employable. In this sense, their functionings are limited by the context of their academic environment. What this thesis argues for is an alternative understanding of difference that does not limit but opens windows of opportunities through a becoming ontology that embraces capability and diverse ways of human functioning. In other words, it is difficult to imagine one without the other.

While Sen has often applied his theoretical insights to matters of welfare economics and social justice concerns, Martha Nussbaum (2003) has highlighted other important advantages of Sen's capability theory. To this end, Nussbaum (2003) argues that "by focusing from the start on what people are actually able to do and to be" (p. 39), social inequalities such as gender imbalances and lack of educational freedoms can be brought to the fore on such a platform.

For the most part, Nussbaum (2003) agrees with the basic tenets of Sen's capability approach but cautions against the 'wide brush of freedom' that Sen sometimes uses to paint some social situations. In other words, it is difficult for freedom in itself to be considered as an overarching or even advantageous achievement or entitlement in a given situation if in so doing it limits the freedom of others. Instead, Nussbaum prefers a more nuanced approach to the concept that focuses more on personhood and human differences of all forms to ensure their overall growth and well-being. Nussbaum (2003) further agrees that the capability theory "is a powerful tool in crafting an adequate account of social justice" (p. 56) but that attempts to link this theoretical construct to policy needs must also fully consider all possible aspects of human capabilities.

2.11.3 Addressing gaps between Deleuze and Sen

This study deliberately draws on both theoretical persuasions of Deleuze and Sen recognizing that the likely gaps that exist between both schools of thought. This in turn could create the ontological foundation for emergent knowledge particularly when considering policy frameworks that embrace becoming and difference within higher

education. Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of both frameworks in supporting the case for the use of these two approaches.

A Comparison of Deleuze and Sen on Becoming, Difference and Capability	
Convergent Points	**Divergent Points**
Becoming and Capability Both theorists acknowledge that a certain level of freedom is desirable whether through a becoming ontology or a capability framework. Deleuze (1994) sees freedom as life itself. Sen (2005) views freedom as being gained through opportunities that may be linked systemic realities. As a result, freedom may not necessarily represent self-actualisation. **Difference** Deleuze and Sen agree that some form of difference exists within human being. Avenues or systems to reveal difference must be established. How this should be undertaken is unclear which represents a gap.	**Becoming and Capability** Deleuze's becoming is not linked to institutional structures but mostly internally based on the 'self': "Structuralism clearly does not account for these becomings, since it is designed precisely to deny or at least denigrate their existence: a correspondence of relations does not add up to a becoming." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, P. 237). Sen's capability approach seems to rely on external institutional structures to test its theoretical premise. Sen also supports the idea of adaptive preferences for individuals based on their life's circumstances which limits the extent of their capabilities within such confines. **Difference** Sen views difference as a complication when certain conditions exist; whereas Deleuze argues that difference in all forms should be embraced.

Table 1: A gap analysis of Deleuze and Sen on becoming, difference and capability

2.11.4 Difference and becoming within a capability framework in TVET and HE

An almost exhaustive search of the literature did not yield examples of countries of a similar demographic make-up that have considered such an approach that places individual well-being at the centre. Where human-oriented approaches are found, they are often connected to life-long learning systems that are largely self-directed (for example Maclean & Pavlova, 2011) and not necessarily driven through institutional policy arrangements. Even if such a proposition was to be seriously considered in the Caribbean context, the various gaps that currently exist between TVET, FE and HE must be bridged.

Figure 5presents a possible becoming ontology that could emerge within a TVET environment against the backdrop of a capability approach

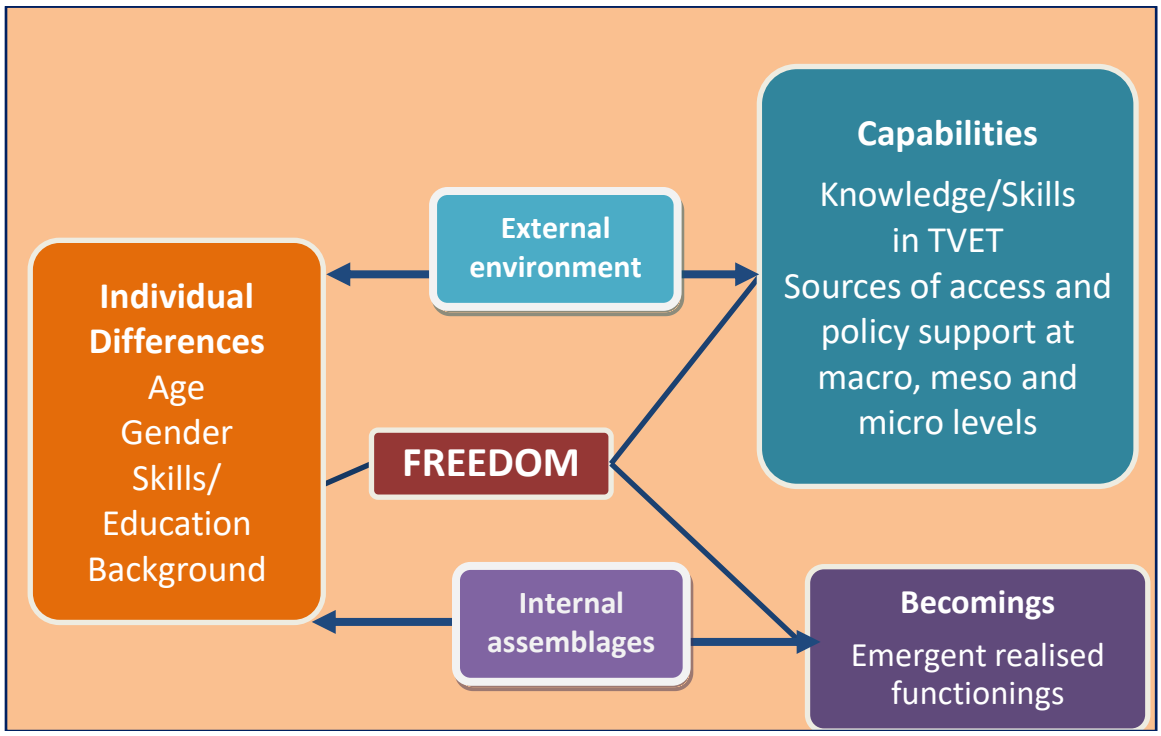

Figure 5 – Development of Theoretical Framework

Placing TVET within a capability framework that acknowledges students' individual differences and their becomings against a backdrop of freedom will certainly be considered as a novel idea within the research context. As Sen (1999) sees it, freedom is directly linked to the quality of life an individual enjoys. Within the context of TVET at LCC an example of freedom could be the extent to which the voices of actors in the programme at the meso and micro levels are heard at the policy levels. While the capability approach is useful in understanding how external systems and procedures are intertwined in the economics of human development, Heckman and Corbin (2016) argue that it lacks a "theory of internal capability formation" (p. 343). This is one reason why I considered the theoretical persuasions of Sen in tandem with Deleuze as one focuses more on external capability while the other focuses on internal assemblages of human development.

2.12 Chapter summary

This very comprehensive review of the literature was critical in understanding elements of the research environment that helps to inform TVET policy direction in a FE and HE context. Understanding prevailing attitudes towards TVET globally and locally was also instrumental in foregrounding the main objectives of this research. When linked to the focal points of this study – becoming, difference and capability, an interesting landscape emerges:

Current TVET environment

TVET provision globally is mostly promoted as an economic alternative for young persons requiring a skill for job security and sometimes operates under turbulent conditions at national and local levels. TVET arrangements are often context-specific and are usually undertaken in special technical institutions or further education colleges. TVET within a HE environment such as that which currently obtains at LCC is rather uncommon.

Policy

Policy is more impactful when it makes meaningful connections to the spaces between discourses. In providing blueprints for courses of action, particularly in educational environments, policy outcomes must become more personalized in order to realise key objectives.

Becoming ontology

For the most part, a becoming ontology is futuristic in its orientation. While several authors have acknowledged its potential to change institutional cultures and structures in positive ways, the literature does not reveal many concrete examples of this ontology being applied to educational policy spheres, and less so within the TVET environment. When presented with concepts of difference and capability, the becoming ontology offers

opportunities for new knowledge to emerge in this exploratory case study to counter existing methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of traditional policy systems.

Since the concept of becoming is a relatively new phenomenon for TVET in HE settings, it is important to consider how future policies and curricula are designed to effectively acknowledge such a theoretical construct. Examples in the field of nursing have shown that a becoming ontology could be utilised. While it may be virtually impossible to transform an entire educational system towards a becoming ontology, incremental changes could be realised in smaller units of change.

Difference

The concept of difference is common in TVET environments where it is often regarded in a negative light. TVET is sometimes seen as a danger to the HE academy and may present a certain level of conflict. The current focus on human development in various sectors is seen as an avenue where various perceptions of difference could be explored. Difference is sometimes considered as the politics of misrecognition that often grows out of a place of fear.

Understanding how concepts related to becoming and difference are articulated in the policy environment is important. The spaces between represent gaps in policy discourses that must be addressed. The voices of policy – tutor, administrator, student – are all important in creating opportunities for freedom. The theoretical underpinnings of Deleuze and Sen, , provide a useful framework that could help to close these policy gaps and possibly assist in answering the research questions:

1. What are the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students?

2. How is the concept of student *becoming* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

3. How is the concept of *difference* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

4. To what extent are existing policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering students' *becoming* within TVET programmes?

5. To what extent are policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering the understanding of *difference* within the TVET HE population?

6. To what extent arethere gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice?

7. How can the student voice enhance policy discourses about *becoming* and *difference*?

CHAPTER 3: Research Design

3.1Research design

The study combines David Cooperrider's appreciative inquiry (Reed, 2007) with a case study methodology. This approach was deemed most suitable for the research environment after other likely alternatives were explored.The case study was mostly carried out at LCC, a small community college in the Caribbean. LCC offers a combination of higher education and further education courses to full-time and part-time students. The course administrators, tutors and current students were based at this site. The country's Ministry of Education was the secondary site that was used to interview the TVET programme co-ordinator who also served as the Permanent Secretary's designate. Former students of the programme were interviewed off-site at mutually convenient locations.

3.2 The case study approach

The case study approach has evolved as a qualitative research method (Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Despite varying views of what constitutes a case study (for example Stake (1995, 2005); (Yin, 1984, 2014); and Merriam (1988) these authors summarily agree that a case study must have clearly defined boundaries – whether it is one programme, one organisation or one policy for example.

It is also paramount to note that the use of a case study method within a qualitative paradigm requires a sophisticated level of rigour throughout so as not to call the researcher's work or the study's findings into question. For these reasons Lincoln and Guba (1990) stress the need to judge both the process and product of case reports (p. 53). In other words, it is not sufficient to just conduct an inquiry and present its findings but to also make a conscientious effort as the researcher to address all critical areas that will contribute to the overall quality of the report.The steps I took in designing this research, including its methodology and theoretical framing were all aimed at establishing and maintaining acceptable quality criteria.

An important point Lincoln and Guba (1986) make in earlier writings that address naturalistic inquiry processes is that there are multiple realities that are built on social constructivism which may ultimately produce divergent views. For these reasons, Lincoln and Guba (1986) stress the importance of research trustworthiness which is concerned with truth value and authenticity which measuresthe fairness of the research.Value bound inquiry, according to Lincoln and Guba (1986) must consider the research paradigm itself; the theoretical basis for inquiry and contextual realities. These elements, when combined with others will determine whether certain findings will be accepted or not.

The criteria that should be used for judging a case report is very critical for judging the quality of the overall process. Lincoln and Guba (1990) discuss four such criteria under the captions: resonance, rhetoric, empowerment and applicability (p. 34). Resonance compares the values of the research paradigm to the case study report and offers opportunities for personal reflection on the fieldwork conducted. Rhetorical elements are concerned with the structural characteristics of the study. The empowerment criteria offer the case researcher an opportunity to clearly outline action steps that may be necessary based on certain outcomes.

The applicability of the case study provides an opportunity for some learning to take place from one context to another or one situation to another. A powerfully concluding point Lincoln and Guba (1990) make is that "a case could be used as a basis for re-examining and reconstructing one's own construction of a given phenomenon." (p. 58). Such an observation inherently suggests that case research should be approached with an open mind which could possibly lead to opportunities for emergent knowledge.

Given this understanding of the case study, this study's exploration of *becoming* within a TVET programme at LCC fits well within these parameters of this research methodology.

Other factors that influenced my choice of a case study for this research were its unique context and situation as well as the need to reach the unrepresented or under-represented

voices in the TVET policy process. An understanding of context and situation in which a study occurs are a vital part of the process (Stake, 2010) in setting the background components of the research. For example, the TVET programme at LCC is unique in its institutional set-up where participants are not traditional high school graduates. Whereas other programmes are owned by LCC, this TVET programme is mostly owned by the Ministry of Education and administered at LCC. This has broad-based implications for the many actors in the learning, administrative and policy environments. The programme was implemented to assist marginalised young people within a society that often places certain social stigmas on such persons.

The need to hear and understand the voices of the TVET policy process at LCC is a cornerstone of this research undertaking. Recognising that policies often take a narrow political view, Stake (2010) argues that the 'little' voice is also important. In the case of LCC the little voices are those of students – present and former, tutors and even programme administrators who may feel that their opinions may not matter once they are expected to execute a particular educational policy mandate that is politically driven. Denzin and Giardina (2006) term such realities as methodological fundamentalism which often characterises the field of qualitative research with its many contradictory episodes. In revealing their stories Stake (2010) cautions that a respectful and caring approach to data collection is necessary.

3.3 Critical observations of the case study methodology

A key to case study analysis is being able to validate relationships against data (Gray, 2014) particularly when using quantitative data. This involves the extent to which certain claims could be generalised. Such situations could very well lead to changes in original hypotheses as approaches to methods such as discourse analysis involve the analysis of common themes as well as irregularities that may exist. Given the 'smallness' of my research context, and the fact that I used qualitative data,validation and generalisation challenges that could possibly occur when attempting to analyse data derived in this environmentwere not necessarily applicable. For instance, my findings may not

necessarily be typical in a larger TVET context given a range of variables from one TVET environment to another. For such reasons, the research was largely context-specific in exploring lessons that could be learnt through certain TVET policy approaches. In so doing though, it may be still possible to compare the study's findings to similar contexts where common themes may emerge.

Another challenge could be the need to navigate power relationships in my context. While my research interests are already known at certain levels in both organisations (college and ministry), I am mindful of the built-in power hierarchies that could straddle the policy divides particularly in areas such as TVET at the higher education level. This situational analysis could possibly impact the way in which the results of this study are received. Again, the use of an appreciative approach could help to significantly diffuse any negative repercussions that could possibly result from researching TVET policy relationships in this micro context.

3.4 Cooperrider's appreciative inquiry as a research frame

David Cooperrider explored a rather innovative approach, based on a social constructivist premise that focused on asking positive questions as a way of understanding the issues in the organisation as well as exploring new methods to bring about change. This approach was proven to be quite effective in producing useful insights about the study of organisations. As a result, the AI approach has been used across many disciplines and levels of organisations world-wide (Reed, 2007).

By connecting post-modernism, constructivism and knowledge through appreciative lenses, Cooperrider et al. (1995) synthesise some key observations that foray almost seamlessly into this study's focal points on becoming and difference within a TVET policy framework in HE:

1) Knowledge is more effective among a community of users rather than individuals; and

2)Human relatedness is best demonstrated through pure forms of engagement that are validated through certain thought processes.

It could be inferred, based on extant structures at the macro, meso and micro levels that opportunities are not readily apparent for the many voices of knowledge to be heard within certain Caribbean HE contexts. For example, within the TVET community under study, policies, whether formal or informal, tend to favour the maintenance of the institutional status quo at the various organisational tiers. As a result, the voices that should matter, for example those of students, may be inadvertently not heard particularly as in relates to discourses that are intended to benefit this population of learner. Such modes of operation create gaps in the system that ultimately provide an inaccurate picture of how we view ourselves and even the lessons that we could learn for societal continuity. One important lesson is that every voice is important (Cooperrider, 1995) as they collectively represent a true reflection of ourselves!

3.4.1 The 4-D cycle of appreciative inquiry

Four critical principals, the 4-D cycle, drive the AI process Figure 6(Cooperrider et al. (1995)

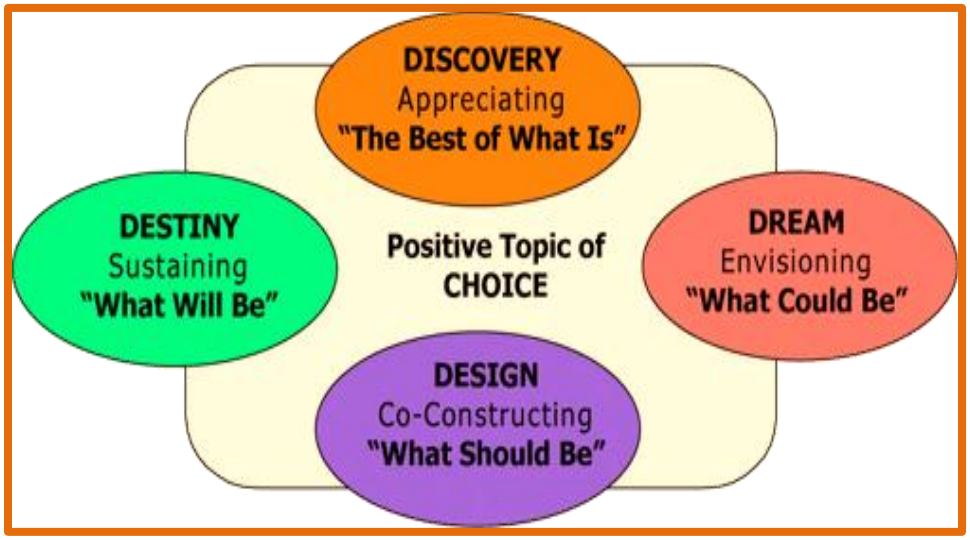

Figure 6– The 4-D Cycle Adapted from Cooperrider et al. (1995)

***Principle 1 - Discovery*:** Research must consider the current functioning of the organisation by seeking to establish 'what works'. In so doing all aspects of its structure – human, social, cultural, technical – are considered.

In applying Principle 1 to the TVET programme at LCC, discovering and appreciating what works may involve examining the TVET initiative itself within the ambit of the larger policy environment and the multiple factors that could possibly impact such relationships. For example, how long has it been in existence? What are some success stories related to its administration? How have students' lives improved as a result of its inception? What are the strengths of extant relationships at the macro, meso and micro levels? How has the community as a whole benefitted from such a programme?

Principle 2 – Dream: Research to this end will consider the future prospects of a particular organisation. Inquiry will therefore largely focus on its social structures. The intent should be to positively project into a future by harnessing valuable aspects of the organisation's history and its current state. In so doing, Cooperrider et al. (1995) stress that the intent is not to envision an unrealistic utopian experience but instead one that is based on realistic and multiple possibilities of knowledge creation that are unfettered by man-made boundaries. This could also be an opportune point to consider possible gaps that may impede such transformations.

Envisioning a TVET programme at LCC through the lens of a *becoming* ontology rather than a traditional economic focus, provides alternative avenues of human consciousness and expression. For example, what are some untapped aspects of the TVET programme that a *becoming* ontology could possibly address for the benefit of the greater societal good?

Principle 3 - Design: At this stage, research into the social potential of the organisation becomes more embedded as avenues are further explored that could possibly contribute to helping organisational members to realise their future potential in reshaping certain elements or organisational life. This is where visionary logic intersects with empiricism (Cooperrider, 1995).

Principle 4 - Destiny: Collaborative relationships between the researcher and the organisation is a key feature of this principle as Cooperrider (1995) views such synergies as important to sustainability.

The key themes and dimensions of AI research, according to Reed (2007) should focus on inclusivity and on the positive aspects of organisational development. To this end, Reed (2007) believes that research models and designs should reflect these themes, with the desired outcome being sustained organisational change of some sort.The diagrammatical view of the stages of appreciative inquiry (adapted from Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) in Figure 7illustrates a logical progression of this theoretical model.

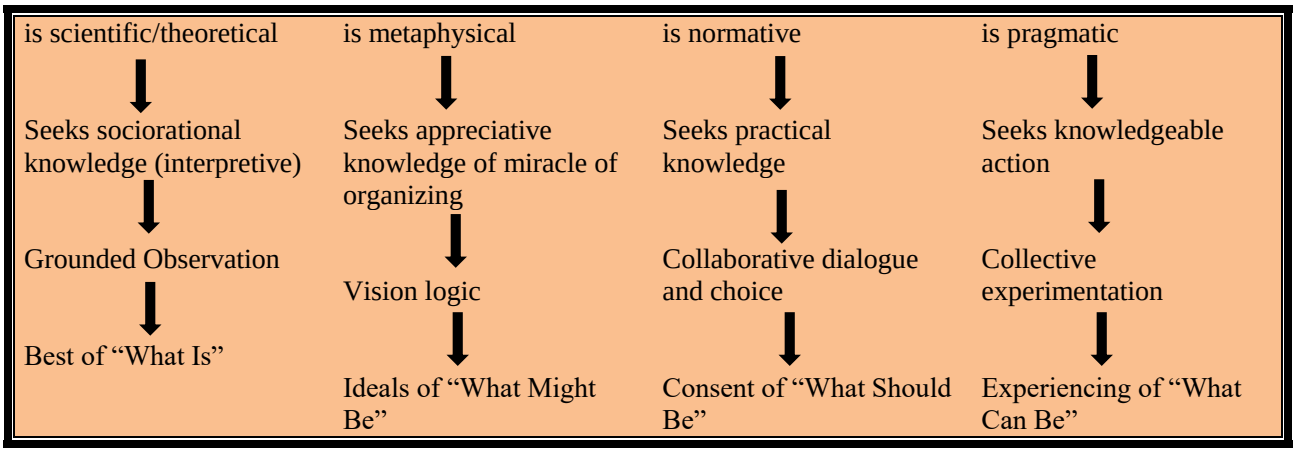

Figure7 – Logical progression of AI - Adapted from Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987)

Aligning such an approach to the contextual realities of conducting research in a small context such as LCC lies at the core of this undertaking. Moreover, given the sensitivities that often surround the delivery of TVET programmes, particularly as it relates to the student participants – under-represented and often marginalised within society due to difference, it was important to utilise an exploratory framework that appreciated the challenges, as well as opportunities, of operating in such an environment. Further, the human element of *becoming*, which is the central theme of this research undertaking, also undergirds the appreciative lens of inquiry. Taken together, the necessary synergy could

then be created in attempting to attain the objectives of this case study. As Tight (2007) posits, it is important to make a link between theory and research into higher education as embedded in such relationships are the answers to the inquiry process.

3.4.2 Benefits of appreciative inquiry to organisations and the research process

The flexibility of this approach to inquiry has also provided numerous opportunities for situational and contextual applicability. AI has frequently been used with action research by many different organisations to bring about change (Ludema and Fry, 2008), including in the education sector (Alston-Mills, 2011; Kung, Giles, & Hagan, 2013; Lalitha, 2013).

To elaborate further on the benefits of AI research, Kung et al. (2013), found the AI approach quite useful when they evaluated a course on higher education in New Zealand. The main objective of the research was to collect and analyse data on the lived experiences of students in a second-year teacher education course. Through focus group discussions and experiential writings using AI thematic analysis, the researchers acknowledged that the AI process allowed them to uncover "essential and taken for granted characteristics, essence, and understandings that are not typically accounted for in course evaluations." (p. 35). Moreover, what Kung et al. (2013) found was the way that AI allowed for deep probity of educational processes, through personal engagements that also provided opportunities for reflective practice for the researchers and the researched.

A detailed search of the literature yielded very little evidence of research that has been conducted using appreciative inquiry as a theoretical model. Bryant (2012) conducted research on the US Virgin Islands Public Education System through appreciative inquiry. For comparative purposes, this study utilised the appreciative approach in interviewing its research participants; however, the analysis of findings did not strictly adhere to appreciative themes. Despite this observation, Bryant's (2012) work showed that AI could certainly be tailored to micro contexts successfully.

In guiding researchers in to appreciable worlds of inquiry, Zandee & Cooperrider (2008) caution that such a research journey is not designed for mechanistic systems of organisational relationships. Rather, AI, seeks to transcend boundaries of relational being by allowing the exploration of phenomena through past and present experiences and even future aspirations. More aptly put:

> *"It invites us to explore how we might more openly relate to the miracle of life on this planet and thereby experience the power of appreciation more frequently and developmentally in each of our relations and initiatives as co-participants in a never ending quest to value and create."* (p. 13).

3.4.3 Drawbacks of an appreciative approach to inquiry

Cooperider's work on appreciative inquiry as a useful methodology has achieved worldwide acclaim; however, critics of the positivity movement provide alternative viewpoints as to why this approach may not benefit all areas of an organisation. For example, Fineman (2006) argue that a focus on positive scholarship may inadvertently constrain human behaviour, workplace stress, anxiety or unhappiness is depressed in favour of more positive organisational attributes. The issue becomes more acute for the researcher in trying to balance inquiry with organisational realities (p. 282). Instead, Fineman (2006) advocates creating avenues for human expression that takes into consideration certain organisational imbalances, whether cultural or social that may mask positive behaviours.

While in favour of the basic tenets of positive stories in creating a certain type of organisational 'spirit', Barge and Oliver (2003) also caution that the main intent to increase organisational effectiveness through appreciation could also become a "technique for manipulation and discipline" (p. 127). Since post-modern organisations are continuously evolving mechanisms, it can be assumed that the nature of meaning, whether positive or negative is also an emergent occurrence.

A potential drawback I may face in using this research design in such a small context is being too cautious about presenting data which may be viewed in a negative light. To this

end, Barge and Oliver (2003) proffer that managers "pay attention to the unique meanings constituted in the intersection of discourses during particular conversational moments." (p. 130). In this way a spirit of appreciation is more easily cultivated in their considered view.

Since the study's focal point is on a particular aspect of a TVET programme within a HE environment, this helps to delimit some of the likely challenges that could be faced as the parameters are very clearly defined. Moreover the ontological foundations of this case study focus on a *becoming* theory that incorporates *difference* and *capability* in a tripartite framework. At the core of this study lie many 'sensitive' issues that must be delicately managed and balanced. Given such realities, the AI approach seems best suited to accomplish the study's objectives.

3.4.4. Framing research questions using the AI approach to inquiry

Despite the noted drawbacks, AI offered me considerable support in framing the approach to my interviews, given the sensitive context in which I was planning to conduct them; however, that did present challenges. For example organisations in the research context, whether private, quasi-governmental, or governmental, tend to be very close-knit entities. They guard their operations zealously and may even view research about them with some level of scepticism as they would rather be portrayed in a positive light. Additionally, the policy culture does not readily lend itself to much inclusivity from the bottom up but that appears to be changing in some institutions. As an insider-researcher I had to exercise care in developing questions that reflect the ethos and inclusivity of the organisation as different contexts and communities may yield different ideas and interests (Reed, 2007).

Bearing these points in mind, I found the process of designing semi-structured questions for the tutors, students, administrators, policy advisor and counsellor somewhat challenging. On the one hand I desired to adhere to the core themes of the thesis with its focus on *becoming* and *difference.* At the same time, I also made a conscious effort to utilise the AI themes – appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing, sustaining – in the development of the questions for each group of participants. I was also mindful of the need to adapt

appropriate language for each group of respondents. For example I used more simplified language for the students whose vocabulary may not be as sophisticated as the tutors and administrators in understanding and explaining their interpretationsof becoming and difference. Based on how the questions were structured, I could fairly assess just how well the questions were understood as a result of their responses. Select copies of interview schedules for students and LCC tutors are attached as Appendices 6 and 7 for ease of reference.

Pilot work is an essential part of qualitative studies, as such activities help to highlight gaps at various stages of the process that could be addressed in the early stages of the research undertaking (Sampson, 2004).I was particularly concerned as to whether the students would have an adequate understanding of the interview questions, so I piloted some of my research questions with this group. I invited two male students from two different study areas of the TVET programme at LCC to take part. It was preferable to obtain some gender balance but it was not possible at that period of time due to scheduling conflicts. The pilot allowed me to determine the difficulty and adequacy of the level of questioning. It also tested how I could undertake the interviews in an appropriate manner and also allowed me an opportunity to try out some techniques for making the students feel comfortable during the interview process.

I found that the pilot questions were sufficiently understood by students based on their responses.The interviewing process also allowed me to reflect on my role as a practitioner/researcher in a familiar context and the importance of maintaining an objective stance in my research role at all times.

3.5 The data collection process

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 5 programme tutors, 6 former students and 5 current students of the TVET programme at LCC; a college administrator of the TVET programme;a counsellor for the students; a Head of Department for the TVET

programme,and a senior programme coordinator in the Ministry of Education who also served as a designate for the Permanent Secretary who is responsible for executing policy mandates. I solicited informed consent and obtained permission from all participants prior to interviewing them.

I used purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2007, cited in Ball, 1990)to gain in-depth knowledge from persons that are closely associated with the organisations involved in the study and the TVET programme itself. Teddlie and Yu (2007) explain purposive sampling as a technique that is used to select specific units or cases based on a particular purpose instead of a random selection. Teddlie and Yu (2007) further detail the six main typologies of purposive sampling that range from typical cases to more extreme categories. Given the small size of the TVET programme at LCC, purposive sampling was the most suitable method to target specific groups within the programme that could share their experiences in response to the research questions. This was achieved by deliberately targeting specific segments of the research population.

Since the sample was already small, it was important for me to interview current and former students from each subject area as much as was feasible. In so doing, it was also necessary for me to attain gender balance so that the study's outcomes were not biased. The main areas of study are house-wiring; small-engine repairs; wood-working; culinary arts; air-condition and refrigeration; and office and computer skills. Students also study basic math and English.

The total number of current tutors and assistants is approximately 10. The entire population of current students numbered about 40. The entire population of former students is approximately 200 since on average 20 graduate annually. I used the same selection process for tutors in ensuring that each study area was represented. Where the administrators were concerned, the options were limited. It was therefore necessary for me to interview the administrative heads at the ministry and school level as well as the programme's counsellor.

I recruited programme participants through the two main partner institutions in the study. I sought and obtained written permission from both the Ministry of Education and Culture and Lambert Community College (LCC). Once I gained access , I held a preliminary meeting with the LCC coordinator who identified possible participants. I then contacted participants via the telephone and agreed to an initial meeting on the college campus where I distributed consent and participant information forms to participants. Once participants agreed to become involved in the study, I then set up meeting dates and times at mutually agreed sites where interviews could be privately conducted.. LCC provided student and tutor contact information. All efforts were made to anonymise participants by using pseudonyms.

I then recorded,transcribed and stored interview information securely to gain an in-depth understanding of the current policy environment and how it impacts TVET students. Additionally, I also reviewed key local TVET policy documents as a way of providing triangulation in the study.

I also considered the use of student narratives (Elliott, 2005) from current and former students.. Narratives are important in gaining insights into the totality of the students' lived experiences particularly as the student voice will form an important part of the entire research undertaking. This approach did not seem practical as structuring 10 narrative stories to attain the overarching research objectives. Instead a more targeted approach that uncovered participant ideas, experiences, values, beliefs and attitudes was deemed more appropriate.

3.6 Semi-structured interviews

The interview is a common data collection method that is used in most forms of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Often it is the only reliable way to obtain data that may not be otherwise known to the researcher. Interviews could range from being very structured and standardised to being very unstructured and informal. The semi-structured

format was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study as it provided the flexibility to explore questions and responses further during the course of the interview based on emergent data. The semi-structured interview in qualitative situations is the preferred format (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While the adaptability of interview situations is one of its strengths, the process itself could be quite time-consuming (Bell, 2005).

Given the range of actors from administrators to students and the sensitive nature of the TVET environment, the semi-structured interview was used so that the research participants felt comfortable in sharing information. This approach also aligned well with the appreciative focus of this case study.I was mindful of the need to use suitable language for questioning the participants particularly since certain terms such as 'becoming' and'difference' might be abstract based on how they are used in the study. For example I would be more direct with tutors and administrators but used simplified terms and even more prompts with students.

Despite the popularity of the interview as a research method, Cohen et al., 2007 outline some areas that could pose ethical challenges. The main one for me is guarding against insider/researcher bias; hence the consideration of an appreciative approach to the inquiry process.

Triangulation may be used to confirm or validate but it can also be used to differentiate (Stake, 2010). This study found it necessary to consider all three aims. In this way, the data provided in the interviews by the various participants could be matched against the documentary evidence as a way of better understanding issues at the macro, meso and even micro levels of both the Ministry of Education and Culture and LCC.

3.7 Document analysis

In addition to interviews, document analysis was used in this study to provide an additional layer of data collection that also serves as a form of triangulation. It was important to establish what types of documents exist that help to inform TVET policy within the higher education environment at LCC (Bell, 2005). The primary sources of documentary evidence that I examined were ministry policy mandates; legal educational frameworks and periodical reports on the TVET programme at LCC. The type of discourse generally used in these documents was another consideration, particularly within a TVET setting. To this end, the study sought to explore whether the language of policy helped or even hindered such processes.

Cohen et al. (2007) refer to document analysis as a methodological wayto code, categorise, and compare content before drawing meaningful conclusions through an 11-step approach. While this method of data collection could be useful for certain research undertakings, Cohen et al. (2007) stress issues that should be considered regarding the reliability of texts such as the inclusion of biased data; inconsistent classification; ambiguous wording; loss of the richness of data due to coding and classifying and possible researcher bias.

My examination of existing documents related to the policy environment and overall administration of the TVET programme at LCC, particularly in the absence of formal policy documents, was aimed at gaining a thorough understandingof the context in which the programme operates. To a certain extent I used purposive sampling as I was mostly interested in documents that directly pertained to TVET in the local HE environment. I obtained access to these documents from the Ministry and LCC coordinators at the time of my interviews for the specific purpose of my research undertaking.

3.8Approach to data analysis – thematic and discourse analysis

I used two forms of analysis in this study – thematic analysis and discourse analysis. From a theoretical perspective, the AI themes – appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing and

sustaining (Cooperridder et al., 1995) provided the basis from which I collected and analysed the data. . It was also important for me to analyse the language of TVET policy at LCC, whether implicit or explicit, through discourse analysis, again to determine any patterns that may exist that could also be linked to the thematic analysis.

I interviewed respondents over a six-week period as I had to schedule times that were convenient for all parties involved in the process. As I received responses, I stored the information in a locked safe to maintain privacy. I used thematic analysis to carefully code and analyse the data. Since the samples across data sets were relatively small, the coding process was done by hand. Students, tutors and administrators were all coded separately. Each grouping was then coded against the interview questions which were quite similar as they were designed to obtain participant views about becoming, difference and capability with regard to the TVET programme at LCC. This method of coding was also chosen to compare responses from one group to the other as well as deciphering common or even emergent themes. As Moses and Knutsen (2007) acknowledge, social contexts are filled with a range of meanings or ways of knowing that draw on various types of evidence, based on contextual factors.

Thematic analysis also allows the researcher the flexibility to search across a range of data sets to find certain patterns that may recur and to make sense of that data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On the other hand, discourse analysis is concerned with how the relationships between culture, language and social life are interpreted usually through constructivist forms of analysis (Fairclough, 2003). For example, the type of discourse that the country's government may use in its policy mandates regarding TVET programmes at the macro level may positively or even negatively impact the ways such policies are executed at the meso and even micro levels. For such reasons, Jephcote and Davies (2004) advocate for meso level actors to have stronger voices in educational policy-making processes. In so doing however, it is also acknowledged that the unequal placement of actors in certain systems coupled with extant power relations may create some difficulty in this regard.

Although there might be some overlap to both thematic and discourse analysis, the desired purposes could yield a rich combination of data sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, while thematic analysis could be theoretically grounded, it can also operate independently of any theoretical framework given its constructionist or even essentialist character (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I found this observation to be true in my research as certain findings may not have been theoretically based but were useful nonetheless. Discourse analysis is one such area that offers a premise for emergent themes that may not fit into a particular theoretical camp.

While Ryan and Bernard (2003) extol the merits of thematic analysis in a similar vein to Braun and Clarke (2006), the importance of validity and reliability is also stressed. Ryan and Bernard (2003) acknowledge that the extent to which both are achieved depends to a large extent on the degree to which triangular approaches are utilised to achieve agreement across data sets. For these reasons, not only were interviews were conducted with samples of actors across the TVET programme but documentary evidence was also introduced to confirm statements or even to provide alternative opinions on certain phenomena.

Crosta (2014) cautions that it is difficult for the researcher's role to be entirely neutral given the highly subjective nature of the qualitative research process. To this end, much is left to interpretative lenses. Given this reality, constant awareness on the researcher's part is paramount. This point is especially meaningful in this case study context as the researcher and subjects are sometimes known to each other and vice versa.

3.9A question of ethics in the inquiry process

The ethical component of the research process is also of extreme importance. Hall (2014) refers to the ethics process as a "relational responsibility" (p. 329) that allows the researcher to shape the research space as well as stance. Within micro contexts such as LCC, the challenge becomes even more acute in guarding the integrity of the research process particularly when the environment is familiar to the researcher. Hanson (2013)

speaks to the issues that may surround insider research by outlining the challenges of "proximity, managing multiple roles, internal politics, ethics and voice" (p. 390). This was an important consideration for me given my relationship with the research environment as an adjunct tutor. Additionally, the smallness of the research context meant that some of the participants may have been known to me.

An important strategy for overcoming such challenges, according to Hanson (2013) is the ability of researchers to "manage themselves in these roles and regulate their behaviours accordingly" (p. 396). In examining researcher-researched relationships, Wang (2013) stresses importance of developing a reflexive stance that provides that 'looking glass' perspective to question certain phenomena and research objectivity. Put another way, it is the ability to critically review research assumptions and expectations that could impact the research process in significant ways (Reed, 2007).

Given the importance of ethically acceptable behaviour in research inquiry, a very stringent ethics process was undertaken prior to the inception of the thesis phase. I conducted the research at two main sites where access to information and personnel was required – LCC and the Ministry of Education. Prior to conducting interviews, I gained authorisation from the college's President and from the Ministry's Permanent Secretary to undertake the research and use related facilities and resources. It was necessary for me to seek authorisation from both institutions since the TVET programme that is a collaborative undertaking between both agencies.

Given the small student and tutor population, I used purposive sampling across the programme subject areas. I made initial contact through both institutions. The LCC administrator then made further contacts with students and tutors for the pilot as well as the actual research phase.I also used pseudonyms to ensure that participant data remained anonymous. I also exercised care when using participant quotations to ensure that individuals were not identifiable, given the small context in which the research was conducted. The names of institutions were also anonymised.

All data that I received was electronically password protected and stored in two separate locations – on my private desktop computer and on an external hard drive that was only accessible by me. I locked all paper copies of interview transcripts and other document analyses in a file vault that was only accessible by me.I also clearly outlined the participation process on the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) at Appendices 2 and 3. I conducted all interviews at mutually agreed locations to ensure the privacy of all participants.

At the point of data collection, it was necessary for me to have participants' contact information which I safely stored and which I disposed of once no longer required.
The potential risks that I identified were minimal to this study. Such risks included navigating possible professional/relationship tensions that could have possibly occurred in such a small context as LCC. Such situations, if not properly managed, could have caused some reluctance in participation. Such concerns however did not materialise.The PIS and consent sheet clearly outlined that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time if any form of discomfort arose. The process did allow for possible referrals to additional career resources if the student participant so desired.

There were no conflicts of interest as I did not work directly with the TVET programme at LCC, including teaching the students. Additionally, I made every possible attempt not to coerce participants during the recruitment process. I was also mindful of conducting the research in such a micro context where I may have been known to some of the research participants. For this reason I made my researcher role in the study and my professional role as a Remediation Coordinator at the Ministry of Education (at the time) very clear. In this way I was not seen as using a position of advantage based on my familiarity or professional position.

Given the highly specialised nature of the TVET programme at LCC, it was not likely that other groups that attend the institution would have felt excluded since their fields of concentration were quite different. Additionally, I did not consider former students of the TVET programme that are now incarcerated for purposes of this study. There was no

evidence that they tried to be included, if they were the request would have been respectfully declined to reduce any likely risks that may be associated with this particular population. After each interview I engaged in a period of reflection about whether I was maintaining my objective stance enough as an insider-researcher.

3.10 Possible transferability of certain findings of study

This case study sought to explore the relatively unusual phenomenon of a becoming ontology within the TVET environment in a HE institution. A study of this type had not been undertaken in this context or even within the Caribbean region. While the findings may not be used in their entirety in other contexts, given the small size of this study, there are aspects that could be transferable. For example, a comparison of TVET for economic good versus TVET for social good; closing the policy gaps between individuation, difference and capability; or even the utility of teacher education training in TVET. These are all surface-level ideas for improving the TVET policy environment. At a deeper level of probity, this case study provides a model for critical reflection about the voices that inhabit policy. When these layers are peeled back what emerges at the core is a real opportunity for a paradigmatic shift not only in policy and practice but a new and dynamic way of thinking about TVET that is boundless and free – a becoming ontology.

3.11 Limitations of the study

Institutional access to documents was easily facilitated at both the Ministry of Education and LCC. Conducting interviews with tutors and current students of the programme at LCC was not necessarily a difficult process once interview times were established. Interviewing former students of the TVET programme proved to be a bit more problematic as some students worked on neighbouring islands and may have been otherwise engaged. All programme administrators and the Ministry's policy advisor were very receptive and accommodating to requests for interviews.

Studying in an online environment on a small island without access to a good library sometimes presented challenges especially when completing the review of the literature. While much of the reading material was available electronically, there were times when access to a particular hard copy may have been useful. This would have meant having to order it and wait for the mailing process. On the local level, policy documents on TVET are rarely available. As a result it was necessary to have an amalgam of reports, legislation and other related documents that were then analysed to gain a triangular view of the current HE environment in which TVET is administered.

The TVET programme at LCC is a somewhat uncommon arrangement in the study context and even within the Caribbean region in attempting to provide TVET to students in a HE environment that is mostly designed for more academic programmes. For such reasons, the results of this study cannot be generalised sufficiently to even serve as a model for other contexts. Despite this limitation, the study's outcomes could still help to influence policy even in an incremental way at the local level.

Insider research could be messy (Clegg, 2012) particularly in a context such as the BVI where many persons are known to each other. There were times, especially during the interview phase, where I felt the level of probity I exercised could have been more forceful but I sometimes hesitated for mainly two reasons: The fact that I was somewhat familiar with the environment having assisted with the initial implementation of the programme at LCC. I was also mindful of the appreciative approach to inquiry that intentionally highlighted positive aspects of the organisations and the various actors that were attached to them.

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter provides the theoretical and methodological 'blueprint' for this exploratory case study. Understanding the nature of qualitative inquiry in education could be quite complex at best, given the social realities that exist in such systems. Since there are varying pathways that could be used to explain certain phenomena and even dispel certain

assumptions, an important part of this process is the theoretical, epistemological and ontological framing of such constructs. Not only would such actions give credence to the entire process but also help to adequately explain "the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world," (Cohen et al., 2007) which is what this study sought to accomplish. Such realities are further explained through the voices of tutors, administrators and students in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 4: Exploring Student Becoming within TVET Policy Discourses at LCC – Voices of Tutors

This chapter presents the views of tutors in exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at LCC. The questions were themed to align with the AI approach to inquiry of appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing and sustaining (Cooperrider et al., 1995) various elements of the TVET environment at LCC. Core questions were posed to 5 tutors in the TVET programme under study in attempting to answer the following research objectives:

1. What are the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students?

2. How is the concept of student *becoming* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

3. How is the concept of *difference* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

4. To what extent are existing policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering students' *becoming* within TVET programmes?

5. To what extent are policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering the understanding of *difference* within the TVET HE population?

6. To what extent arethere gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice?

7. How can the student voice enhance policy discourses about *becoming* and *difference*?

To provide complete anonymity to the tutors, they are named Tutors A, B, C, D & E. Their responses to questions are not referenced to the literature so as to provide a full account of their views.

4.1 Tutor demographics

The tutors worked with the TVET programme for varying lengths of time and came from different educational backgrounds and experiences.

The age ranges of the tutors interviewed were between 45 and 65 with the mean age being 50. The participants were two male and three female. The subjects taught were Culinary Studies, Computer Applications, English and House-wiring. The years taught in the programme ranged from three to ten, with ten being the number of years that the programme has been in existence. The mean number of teaching years was six. Two of the tutors attained Bachelor's degrees while the other three tutors received technical training in their fields to an Associate degree level. None of the tutors had been trained in teaching methods of special education. Unfortunately, this situation tends to be the norm especially in TVET programmes in this Caribbean territory where tutors may have professional certification but not necessarily teacher education training. The trend is slowly changing to closer align to best practices globally where it is the accepted standard for teachers to be trained in teaching techniques.

Understanding the tutors' perspectives as they relate to the TVET programme at LCC was a vital component of this research undertaking. It was important to gain insights into 'their world' given their ongoing engagements with other actors – students, administrators and even parents.

Themes drawn from the tutor interview data allowed for a richer understanding of not only the TVET context and course content but also the supporting structures that facilitate such programmes at the micro and meso levels. Thematic data that focused on the policy environment at the macro level was also considered, given the important role that such political drivers play in the conceptualisation and delivery of educational initiatives in the research context.

Thematic data was therefore organised based on:

Factors that shape TVET policy and practice at the macro, meso and micro levels such as tutors' expectations of students in the TVET programme; tutors' understanding of the policy environment in which they work, including policy voices; recognition of gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice

- Emergent themes, whether explicit or explicit, that could be attributed to possible becoming and difference ontologies as well as the capability approach
- AI themes of appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing and sustaining' at the macro, meso and micro levels

4.2 Factors that shape TVET policy discourses at macro, meso and micro levels

4.2.1 Tutors' expectations of students within a culture of difference

The TVET programme at LCC specifically targets students that are often marginalised due to low academic achievement and repeated failure of grades. The challenge for such a student population is often how others perceive them and their capabilities, including their tutors. As a result tutor expectations could also vary.

The majority of tutors appeared to be quite sympathetic of students that may have had such challenging life experiences but also opined that students could still aspire to be successful despite the odds: *"I have always had high expectations of my students. I have never put them down because they may not know how to do something. I always encourage them to keep trying and to never give up."*(TE)

Given the obvious range of learning styles of students, it was also important to understand whether the tutors' approaches to teaching were also differentiated based on the learner. For the most part, while all tutors recognised the need for individualised instruction at times, others may have felt ill-equipped to do so. For example, TA spoke of the need to "*get them where they are, find out what interests them and modify your activity to capture them."*On the other hand, Tutor C, while acknowledging levels of difference, also

recommended specialised instructors to deal with the students*: "I must say these are special students with emotional issues and attitude problems which any ordinary person cannot really fix."* It can be inferred from TC's statement that the word 'ordinary' might be used to mean 'mainstream'. TC then went on to state that students should not be blamed for being or feeling different, but did not clearly state who should be held accountable.

None of the tutors admitted to having specialised training in teacher education or special education that would equip them even more to work with this population of learners. This raises other questions as to whether a tutor that is industry-trained in a particular field could adequately prepare students for not only the world of work but for lifelong learning opportunities.

4.2.2 Tutors' understanding of the policy environment, including policy voices

Policy mandates for TVET programmes, whether at the secondary or tertiary level, are initiated at the Ministry of Education. Such mandates are often formulated by the government of the day through their political manifestos. The statements are often then turned into action plans at the institutional levels but not often articulated in formal policy documents. As a result ad hoc arrangements are often accepted as informal policy to guide programmes such as the TVET at LCC. The main issue with such arrangements is the level of confusion and even uncertainty that could exist between the various organisational levels that are expected to execute such programmes. Several tutors alluded to the fact that though policy mandates are well-intentioned, they sometimes lack clarity:

For instance, Tutor B lamented about the absence of clear policy or programme guidelines:

> *"Have something set out – guidelines. Tell me what are your criteria for students so that the tutor can know how to devise the work and for some students who are slow learners spend a little more time."*

Tutor A responded in a similar vein when asked about policy arrangements. The response seems to imply that the tutor was largely responsible for aspects of the syllabus that would be taught in that particular subject area:

"There is none. I can't say I have seen anything formal. I was only given a syllabus in the beginning. I had to go through and pick out what applies to them (the students)."

Formal policies for TVET delivery are seemingly largely absent even at the tertiary environment. The issue is further compounded with collaborative arrangements such as this programme which is a joint effort between the Ministry of Education and LCC. In such a case, ownership of the policy whether formal or informal, particularly at the college level, becomes a challenge as the institution has its own internal policy arrangements for its existing programmes. In other words, institutional boundaries may lead to role conflict or role confusion at the meso and micro levels in terms of agency responsibilities. To illustrate, one tutor remarked:

"They [meaning the TVET students] are not really a part of the LCC family. We try to facilitate them. What I am saying if you are going to have a Community College you expect community college material. I think TVET makes the college look bad as they have fights, they steal and the police have to come at times." (TD)

This tutor's statement clearly implies that if LCC took full ownership of the TVET programme, such a decision could negatively impact the image of LCC. Even the use of the word 'family' could imply a certain level of inclusivity or exclusivity depending on how it is viewed and by whom. Interestingly, even though this tutor specialises in the teaching of a particular technical subject, students that are seen as being too different are seemingly not viewed in a positive light due to their various challenges that may impede academic competency. In offering some level of hope, the tutor agreed that it is not good to create an environment where students are stereotyped while admitting that there are no easy solutions for disenfranchised students.

It was a bit difficult to ascertain how much tutors really understood the policy environment for the administration of TVET at LCC – more importantly the voices that should inform the policy process including those of the students:

"I don't believe students know what they want. Who they [policy designers] need to listen to are the instructors on the programme." (TD)

This statement seems to suggest that the student's voice is irrelevant.

Another tutor (TC) remarked that some of the students have already condemned themselves and did not think they could contribute intelligently to the policy process.

Similarly, TB implied that the student voices are not that important, instead, *"they should be grateful for the opportunity that is given to them by government and not abuse the situation (in relation to the training programme)."*

> *"I would say right now the students have no voice in it [policy process]."* (TA)

Tutor E was the exception with regard to the student voice:

> *"I think it is very important for the students to have a voice in the policy design of their programme. After all it is all about them so why not?"*(TE)

Tutors seemed reluctant to share their views on why there is an obvious absence of the student voice from the policy process even when asked. The tutors did not indicate that such a situation poses a problem but rather seem to accept it as the norm, which to me was slightly disconcerting.

4.2.3 Recognition of gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice

(a) Curriculum gap

Several gaps were identified between TVET policy and practice at LCC at all institutional levels. For the most part subject tutors take the initiative to structure their teaching content as they see fit based on loosely structured, where available, curriculum guidelines. This leads to a situation where tutors seem to operate in silos. Such a situation significantly impacts the quality of student learning as there are no consistent standards from which to assess performance:

> *"I tie my objectives to what is at the back of the certificate of completion."* (TA)

> *"A lot of what is done is left up to the tutor, therefore the standards are inconsistent."* (TE)

(b)Teacher education certification gap

Closely linked to the curriculum gap is the fact that tutors are mostly certified in the area of their subject speciality but not necessarily qualified in teacher education.

> *"I did not come from a teaching background. I have worked in the private sector for all of my adult life as a self-employed businessperson. I have a passion for young people and that is why I have taken a keen interest in the TVET programme at LCC."* (TE)

> *"Being a past student in my teaching field, I have knowledge of what the student wants."* (TC)

> *"What helped me is that I taught on the other side (college's main campus) before (teaching in this TVET programme)."* (TA)

The tutor responses clearly show that there are no specific teacher education standards in this programme. This gap could significantly impact the delivery of programme content. While the context provides general teacher training opportunities for primary and secondary levels of schooling, very few opportunities exist for training in TVET within the HE or FE environment. Regional bodies such as the Caribbean Association of Training Agencies (CANTA), which is endorsed by the umbrella Caribbean Community (CARICOM) organisation provide some level of technical support but more needs to be done locally.

(c) **Communications gap**

It was obvious from the tutor responses that there are gaps in communication at the macro, meso and micro levels that significantly impacts the programme performance overall:

> *"We do not have enough meetings to discuss some of the problems or issues that may arise with the administration. Sometimes you are going through problems and would like to compare with other situations. Sometimes we have to solve problems on our own. They don't communicate enough."*(TA)

At the micro level, communication with students of the programme ends upon their graduation. Given the vulnerable nature of this population of learners, obtaining feedback

on how they have adjusted in their lives outside of the institution could help to strengthen the programme objectives. To this end, Tutor B alluded to the importance of feedback:

> *"We have to follow up. We have to get feedback on how the programme helped students. We have to see whether we are keeping on the right track and the contributions made by them (the students) whether they are worthwhile."*

Tutor A also made a similar recommendation:

> *"What they can do is get feedback from students that went through the programme before in terms of how things could be done differently based on their experiences."*

At the micro level, Tutor B shared:

> *"You need to give them that open communication where they feel somebody loves them, somebody cares not only from an educational standpoint but about traits in their lives where they will have to venture out too."* (TB)

4.3 AI themes of 'appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing and sustaining' at the Macro, meso and micro levels

Grouping the tutor interview data under AI themes (Cooperrider et al., 1995) was seen as a necessary part of the analysis process. In so doing, what began to emerge was also a picture of immanence, difference and even becoming.

Using the appreciative theme of discovery, or explaining the best of what exists at LCC, the tutors mostly spoke of their personal sense of satisfaction about the academic and personal growth of their students:

> *"She got kicked out of school for her behaviour and I saw changes in her as she went through the programme. She actually matured and understood what is expected of her outside of it."* (TA)

The common themes that seem to emerge as a result of the tutors' experiences were mostly of creating a nurturing and caring environment so that students could flourish even when they leave the institution.

1. In envisioning or dreaming what could be the tutors shared some common themes of how they would like the TVET programme to evolve in the future:A TVET programme that experiences a reduced drop-out and failure rate.

2. Fulfilled young people that are not fettered by institutional and programme boundaries; whose voices help to inform the policy process.

3. The removal of stereotypes and other negative perceptions about TVET within the local HE environment, including a positive change in the language of TVET discourse.

4. TVET not only being seen through economic lenses but also social and even futuristic lenses that embrace all aspects of a 'becoming' ontology through differentiated approaches to learning.

5. An alignment of the macro, meso and micro environments for the greater good of all actors. This requires more effective forms of communication and a serious commitment to financial, human and technical resources.

6. A wider community that embraces TVET and provides opportunities for students to 'become'.

In the words of one tutor, *"You could be the best of the best as a student. Unfortunately the society does not support you when you come out and cannot find a job."* (TD)

Co-constructing or designing what should be is an integral component of the appreciative inquiry process. Based on the feedback from tutors, the following points were noted. Macro and meso level actors should adopt a more humanistic approach to programme delivery; set clear and meaningful policy guidelines; and develop the whole student.

Destiny or sustaining what will be is an important component of the appreciative inquiry process. In a possible world of 'becoming' some respondents felt that current mind-sets towards TVET provision must change:

> *"Becoming is a mind-set that allows individuals to think beyond boundaries. Right now TVET is set within institutional boundaries. The syllabus may not allow for the development of students' interests."* (TA)

What could be inferred from the tutors' general comments is a need to strengthen the existing culture of the TVET programme at LCC at all levels. While there are many positive areas in the programme that have proven beneficial to its actors, more can be done to

ensure a pervasive 'capability culture' that supports and celebrates a 'becoming' ontology instead of student differences.

4.4 Emergent themes that could be attributed to becoming, difference and capability

Tutor expectations of students also brought two of the study's main themes of difference and capability to the fore. For the most part, tutors saw difference as being a deficit position that must be countered with high expectations or capabilities. To the extent that difference was seen as a positive variable that could yield positive outcomes was less evident from the tutors' responses:

> *"My understanding of 'different' in the TVET environment is a student doing a task in his or her own peculiar way that might not be the same as others."* (TC)

While the tutor did not explain whether the students' actions that were different were also acceptable, the implied view that is largely held in this micro society is that being different is a departure from the norm, but who or what determines systems of normalcy? Could a becoming ontology force programme actors to view difference and likewise capability through other lenses? The dominant view of difference, particularly within the TVET environment in this context is often quite noticeable. For example, TDreferred to a disruptive student as a 'bad egg':

> *"when you see one bad egg it can spoil everyone else – she was not learning anything but was causing the most trouble and disrupting the programme."*

Another tutor spoke of the need to separate some students as they will retard the growth of other students who really want to learn.

Based on the tutors' comments it can be inferred that a culture of separation and difference surrounds the TVET programme at LCC at the macro, meso and micro levels. Such an observation is significant in teasing out such variables within a possible becoming ontology

that recognises capabilities and sees difference as a positive and not necessarily a negative phenomenon.

While questioning tutors about their interpretations of a becoming ontology and notions of difference, several respondents discussed both concepts through a 'capability lens. For example, one tutor remarked:

> *"We have beings that we try to fit into certain moulds. Some argue that we limit student capacity to become whatever they want to become. Structures are designed to help could become a hindrance. For example, students may be turned off and drop out because they did not get to realise their particular goal in terms of what they wanted to achieve. My thing is the syllabus does not allow for that."* (TA)

Interestingly, while the majority of the tutors share that there is some level of capability within students, they also make references to the students as being mentally challenged or 'not normal'. Again this assessment presents a deficit view that may not augur well with a becoming ontology that promotes capability thinking. This is perhaps where the greatest challenge may lie – shifting the mind-sets of programme actors when the general discourse about TVET and the students that attend such programmes has been less than positive.

For example, Tutor 'A' remarked:

> *"Sometimes I feel overwhelmed teaching the students. Sometimes I am excited to see improvement in the subject area and sometimes I am concerned that they did not make it out of the programme."* (TA)

4.5 Chapter summary

An overall summary of tutors' experiences with the TVET programme at LCC revealed some noteworthy findings. Students are indeed treated differently from the college's mainstream students. There are many policy gaps between the macro, meso and micro levels. There are also too many programme limitations – financial resources, material

resources, and lack of trained tutors in teacher education in particular. Moreover, the TVET programme does not offer a wide enough variety of course options. On the other hand, the wider community could support the TVET programme more and clearly defined policy on TVET in higher and further education be beneficial to this context.

CHAPTER 5: Exploring Student Becoming within TVET Policy Discourses at LCC – Voices of Former and Current Students

This chapter presents current and former students' views of the TVET programme at LCC. Using the AI structural framework, students were asked to share their experiences as a former and current student; how they thought their acquired skills could benefit the country; the importance of having their voices heard; campus life at LCC and their future aspirations. Embedded in these questions were opportunities for emergent themes on becoming, difference and capability. It was also important to obtain some background history of their secondary school experiences which may have contributed to their being enrolled in the TVET programme at LCC.

5.1 Former students of the TVET programme at LCC

I interviewed six former students of the TVET programme. Three students were female and 3 male. Their ages range from 27 to 19. The years of completion for 5 of the students were: 2007, 2011, 2013 and 2016. One student did not complete the requirements for graduation in 2016. The subject areas studied were Computer and Office Applications, Plumbing, Small Engine Repairs and Culinary Arts.

Five out of the six former student respondents were categorised as high school 'drop-outs'. While there were some slight variations in actual reasons for not obtaining their high school certification, there were some core learning traits of this group that were quite evident as the Table 2 indicates (all names are fictitious to protect respondents' identities:

Former Student	Learning traits/characteristics
Juwan	Very hands-on student who may have been a little troubled
Corey	Graduated from high school (exception)
Asha	Lack of motivation in high school curriculum content; more influenced by her peers
Zuri	More of a visual and artistic learner
Lance	Tended to 'freeze up' on tests and was more of an 'oral' student
Madison	Did not wish to share her high school experience

Table 2 – Learning traits/characteristics of former students

5.2 Differential treatment at high school level

The former students all admitted to being treated differently in high school mostly as a result of repeated failure of their grades. In their collective view, they were seen as failures that did not fit in to the main stream secondary programme. Such experiences were frustrating for most of them. As a result, they were then transferred to the TVET programme to 'learn a skill' for future employment:

> *"I left high school in 3rd Form. I was not motivated to continue. The school principal often picked on me. I ended up following my friends. My father then encouraged me to sign up for the TVET programme."* (Asha)

A common theme of student failure and what happens to such students in the educational system in the research context is a constant refrain. To this end TVET is often viewed as the last resort to rescue these students from themselves.

5.3 Understanding difference in TVET and HE

The TVET students at LCC are accommodated in a separate wing of the college's main campus. All of their classes are confined to this area. They are grouped with their peers of similar ability levels for their core subject offerings compared to the secondary environment where they were exposed to more mixed ability groupings, hence making differential treatment more obvious. At the macro and meso levels the TVET programme in general is regarded at a 'different' or on lower level than the college's main technical programmes. At the micro level, the students may not have sensed such levels of differentiation in this environment:

> *"The adjustment to campus life was not that difficult for me as I was studying something that interested me."* (Corey)

Asha's response to her understanding of difference was quite representative of the former students' views for the most part:

"I think students that have a different approach to work should not be treated differently. I do not think it is a bad thing. When I was in high school I did not understand certain subjects. I was treated differently by my teachers. Such experiences made me feel like giving up. I think all students should be treated fairly. They all have some worth."

5.4 Training benefits to the economy

For the most part, several former students were able to access skills training in areas that they liked and have enjoyed some measure of success upon completion:

"I signed up to do culinary arts because I love to cook. I learnt discipline too and came out at the top of my class. I even ended up being on the country's culinary national team and today I am working as a chef." (Corey – graduated 2011).

"My dad was a tradesman so I was always around the electrical and plumbing trade. I first signed up to do plumbing and then I went back for an additional year and did computer studies while completing my high school certification. I got an internship in a government department and then did an Associate degree in electrical engineering. Today I work with another government department doing electrical engineering and Ii have applied to study further for my Bachelor's degree. The programme was good for me in keeping me grounded and exposing me to good training." (Juwan – graduated 2007)

Others may not have been as successful upon graduation:

"I studied small engine repairs since there are a lot of broken down vehicles on my island and I like fixing things. Since I left the programme I worked for a short time at a supermarket. Since then I have not been employed which is a bit frustrating." (Lance – graduated 2015)

Certain students did not complete for various reasons. Zuri who was enrolled in the computer programme shared why this was the case:

"I was frustrated with the level of Math and English taught as it was too low for me. I was also frustrated with the computer classes. I wanted to do more exciting stuff on the computer. We did a lot of work from templates. I did not understand all of the assignments and did not complete the programme. I became frustrated and dropped out." (Zuri – dropped out of TVET programme in 2016).

With such a wide variance of experiences, determining the reasons why one student may have succeeded and not the other may be somewhat difficult. For instance, the students that were enrolled in the culinary programme seemed to have progressed well in the working world. Is it because of their levels of interest or the demand for such skills in the industry? This could very well have been the case for Lance who studied small engine repair but now has difficulty finding employment in an area where potential clients may prefer to have someone more experienced fixing their vehicles' engines. Given such shifting economic drivers, one wonders whether the college has the capacity or even agility to change the curriculum to reflect the latest economic trends.

Clearly another theme that has emerged across the former student responses is that their training was designed to prepare them for the world of work in their particular area of interest. However when asked about how prepared they were socially for life some students were not as clear in their responses as they could not articulate how they would like to grow socially. This could very well point to an area of deficiency in the programme. Others saw the communication skill as being important to their overall advancement in life:

> *"Socially I would have liked to learn the skill of communicating in a better way with others. I also think building self-esteem is important."* (Asha)

5.5 Student challenges

The challenges that were identified varied from one student to another. For instance, Corey had already graduated from high school so he had not experienced the same level of disaffection as the other students. In his words, *"I did not find much of a challenge in the programme. I did find some of the students that did not graduate from high school a bit distracting in their behaviour."*

Another student alluded to the pull of peer pressure on her: *"I had to separate from those friends that influenced me negatively. I learnt that if I was going to progress in life, I had to surround myself with positive people"* (Asha).

Lance experienced some challenges with the new content to be learnt:
"At the start I had no knowledge of small engine repair. It was a bit frustrating for me."

On the other hand, Zuri felt that tutors did not always understand her needs and therefore did not find the training helpful: *"My relationship with my tutor was very frustrating as I felt she did not always understand my needs. My relationship with my peers was good because we worked together."*

Interestingly, Zuri was the only student participant that did not complete the requirements for graduation from the programme. At age 20, Zuri still has no certificate of completion whether from high school or the TVET programme. Is this a capability issue for her? Who helps her to uncover her passion, her real drive if she does not fit in to a TVET system that is typically designed for students like her? In the eyes of the society in which she lives, she may continue to be viewed as a failure under extant systems that measure success by certificates and degrees. Could a becoming ontology still assist an individual like her to still lead a rewarding and productive life? How would systems and structures have to change to accommodate students like her? As she pointed out, *"Students should be allowed to express their learning in individual ways."* Could this be a seed that is planted for a becoming ontology that recognises difference and promotes capability on an individual level?

> *"It would be nice if persons could see me as being artistic. Why should I have to change my identity to conform to some standard that society has set? This is who I am?"* (Zuri.

5.6 Student values (former students)

Student	Value system
Juwan	*"I value my level of determination to succeed despite setbacks that I may have faced. I can be somewhat shy which could hinder me at times."*
Corey	*"I am proud of my ability to stay focused on what I want. I must overcome my shyness."*
Asha	*"I am a tomboy but I could be shy sometimes."*
Zuri	*"I value my belief in myself the most. I will also say my values have changed as I am not as easily influenced by others as before."*
Lance	*"I am more of a rounded person and I communicate well."*
Madison	*"I am a determined person. My values have not changed that much."*

Table 3 – Value systems of former students

The core themes that emerged when questioning student respondents about their values were that of determinism, belief in oneself and interestingly being shy. Given their academic backgrounds it is understandable why they would have had to persevere against many odds. Whether such experiences could have led to them internalising certain feelings which could have been masked as being shy is worth exploring. References were not made to societal structures like the home, churches, schools or other community-based organisations in helping to build their value systems.

5.7 Importance of the student voice in policy

A core objective of this research was to ascertain whether the student voice was being heard in TVET policy processes and how such voices could enhance related discourses on becoming and difference in such environments.

The context in which the student voice is heard, or not heard, must also be understood. In the research context, previous generations of young people were taught "to be seen and not heard" which is a local saying. Many of the actors that now influence policy may have grown up in such a system and accepted it as the norm. While today's generation of young people is more exposed and informed as a result of a variety of social media influences, a gap may still exist between what they may voice to their peers in social settings compared to what they may voice in more structured institutional settings. This was evident in their responses to questions related to the student voice in the policy process:

Student	Importance of the student voice
Juwan	*"I think it is important for our voices to be heard."*
Corey	*"The youth voice is important not only in the policy process but in helping to motivate other young people that is why I use opportunities to tell other young people about my story about joining the programme and eventually being on the national culinary team and becoming a chef at a well-known restaurant."*
Asha	*"I thought it was important for my voice to be heard. I do not think we were stopped from sharing our opinions. I just do not know if we were taken seriously. I think if students had a greater input on how the programme was designed in certain areas that could have made a difference. Some found certain*

	areas boring and dropped out as a result."
Zuri	*"I do not think my voice matters. I have voiced my frustrations about the programme to my counsellor but that has not helped me in my situation."*
Lance	*"I felt free to voice my opinions to my instructors."*
Madison	*"I did not pay too much attention about whether my voice was heard or not. I think if I wanted to make a point about something my tutor would listen as well as the programme administrator. They were very caring and understanding."*

Table 4 – Importance of the student voice from former students

It was obvious from the students' responses, for the most part, that the extent to which their voices were heard was mostly at the micro level and sometimes at the meso level. None of the students indicated whether they were ever invited to contribute to a policy meeting or discussion about initiatives that may impact their programmes of study at the macro level.

5.8 Future aspirations of students

Since a becoming ontology and AI themes bear similar futuristic characteristics, it was important to understand how these former students viewed their future and their places within it. Interestingly, few common themes emerged as students were at different stations in their lives. Several desired to start their own businesses. Only one was interested in accessing higher education while others just simply sought stable employment. One student even found it difficult to dream of a future:

> *"I cannot dream about a future. Everything is depends on me completing high school and having some type of diploma"* (Zuri).

When asked about additional social skills that may be required for them to become all that they can be, some respondents spoke about the need to become more assertive and be more outgoing while others were not sure about the additional skill sets they may need. Even though some of these students may have graduated from the programme over 5 years ago, the fact that they are still unsure of the tools they may require to lead a successful life speaks to a possible gap in their space for becoming. If such training is not available in their places of employment, how could they acquire any requisite skills after completing

the TVET programme? How could a becoming policy discourse in TVET be further explored at the tertiary level to better 'bridge that gap' between skills training and their future possible lives?

5.9 Perspectives from current students

Five current students enrolled at the TVET programme at LCC were interviewed. Two of them were female and three male. The students were enrolled in computer and office applications, culinary arts, small engine repair and house-wiring. The average age of the group was 17.2 years.

The participants were asked similar questions to those of the former students of the programme related to their experience; their likely contributions to the country; adjustment to campus life, including their views of difference in such an environment; and their future aspirations.

It was important to obtain the current views of students for comparative purposes particularly since the programme has been in existence for 10 years. In those 10 years, no study of this nature has been undertaken that could serve as a benchmark of the programme's overall impact on its various actors and the society at large.

For the most part, many of the current students' responses were quite similar to the former students with regard to their life experiences with schooling to-date. For instance, they have all experienced repeated failure at the secondary level that led to their enrolment in the TVET programme at LCC. Their individual courses of study have afforded them some opportunities to learn something that is hands-on in a field that interests them as a way of making them employable. Others have felt limited by their lack of programme choices.

In trying to gain insights about the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro levels as understood by the current students, it was important to note

what may have been different about this group, compared to the former students, apart from the fact that they were not yet exposed to the world of work as the former students were. The themes that were identified mostly focused on the relevance of the TVET programme to the students' needs; benefits of their training to the country; how they viewed their future as a result of involvement in such a programme and whether they felt their voices mattered with regard to policy formulation and implementation. The responses of the current students were then analysed to further understand policy discourses that could impact concepts of becoming and difference.

The students were given fictitious names to protect their identities and provide a certain level of anonymity.

5.10 Relevance of TVET programme

Current students	Responses
Destiny	*"I think the programme is good for me since I like IT but it is a lot of work preparing so many documents. I think that part of it is boring."*
Prya	*"I am not sure what I wanted to do with my life. I decided to try culinary since it is about food but I am liking it."*
Hakim	*"Right now the programme is safe. I may change my mind later, I don't know."*
Ryan	*"My father is a mechanic and encouraged me to do this programme. I am not sure if I want to do it in the future."*
Xavier	*"I never heard about house-wiring as a course but decided to try it to see if I like it and maybe I can find employment afterwards since we have a lot of construction going on."*

Table 5 – Relevance of programme to current students

The responses of current students regarding programme relevance further demonstrate that there is still a heavy focus on skill development for employment. There is also an element of uncertainty in certain responses – whether it is about committing to the training or even after completion.

5.11 Training benefits to the country

The current students' responses mostly focused on whether they would find employment after the programme to better their financial lives. Most of them thought about short-term benefits to themselves and not necessarily long-term benefits to the country. Did programme limitations, in terms of study options, also limit the students' capacity to envision certain future possibilities economically and socially? Could a focus on a becoming ontology allow them to view themselves and their possible contributions more positively?

> *"Right now I have a two-year daughter that I must support. I just need a decent job so that we can have a better life. That is one reason why I chose culinary. There is always a need for persons to cook in our restaurants. I am not sure if my contribution to the country is important. All I have experienced is rejection so I have no confidence in this system."* (Prya).

These responses clearly show that some current students link their training to economic survival. This could be attributed, in part to their experiences with schooling to date, which may not have been always positive. As a result, they are also failing to see where they can still contribute in positive ways to society.

5.12 Importance of the students' voice in policy

Understanding the importance of the students' voices in the policy process is a critical part of this research undertaking as it also speaks to issues related to becoming, difference and capability. Participants were asked to share their views in this regard:

Students	Views about their voices in the policy process
Destiny	*"I believe if I am asked to give my opinion about something I will not have a problem to do so."*
Prya	*"It really does not bother me whether I have a say or not. At the end of the day, the*

	Minister of Education is the one who has all the powers anyway. So why bother?"
Hakim	*"I have never thought about whether my voice should be heard. For most of my school life I have been told that I am not good enough so I don't think anyone in authority would listen to me now."*
Ryan	*"No one from the Ministry has ever asked for our opinion about the programme and how we feel about it as far as I know. They probably feel like we cannot think about such matters for ourselves which is sad."*
Xavier	*"I tried to tell the college administrator that we should spend more time training on different sites outside and not just the classroom. That was my way of making my voice heard. The administrator said that the ministry would have to decide about such changes. I also feel like some tutors do not care enough about us to go the extra mile but if I really say how I feel I may be identified and treated even worse."* Unfortunately the college appears powerless to make any changes to the programme's curriculum. There seems to be a disconnect between the college and the ministry regarding this very important element.

Table 6 – Current student views on their voices in the policy process

Based on their responses, it is obvious that most students do not feel as though their voices really matter when it comes to the policy process. There is a sense of helplessness that is embedded in their responses. For the most part they seem to accept what is given to them in terms of policies related to their TVET programme. In exploring this phenomena further, it is important to understand what the contributing factors are at the macro, meso and micro levels and how they intermesh where the overall student experience is concerned.

5.13 Current students' views about their future

Since a possible becoming ontology is very futuristic in its orientation it was important to gain insights into the current students' perspectives about their future. The appreciative approach also proved to be quite useful in determining where they are and where they would like to be or a desired state in the future.

Students	Views about their future
Destiny	*"I would like a future where I can do exciting things in IT like web page designs and investigating cyber crimes. I will also like to operate my own internet café. For me to be successful I would need community support and lots of money. I will also need to develop more confidence in myself and how I interact with others."*
Prya	*"I prefer to live in the here and now. No one knows what the future holds so why even think about it?*
Hakim	*"To me the culinary field could be exciting if I stick with it. If I could dream of a future I would like a world where I am able to express my artistic side freely with no one putting barriers around me. I could then create an exciting life. Maybe I could go into a business later on but before that I could probably work in a 5-star restaurant and maybe even travel to different places to sample their foods and how they do things in the culinary field. I mostly keep to myself right now so I know I would have to change that."*
Ryan	*"Right now I am confused about my future. I feel I am doing this programme because my father wanted me to do it. This programme does not offer too many choices that will allow me to think about my future seriously."*
Xavier	*"My future will depend on how successful I am when I leave this programme. As I see it the job market right now is really bad. If the economy gets worse I cannot see a bright future here for me in the BVI. Maybe I may have to move away to another country like the UK where no one knows me to really grow and become the person I want to be but right now I cannot say what that would be."*

Table 7 – Current student views on their future

The over-arching themes that have emerged as a result of the current students' responses were uncertainty about the future and even self-doubt that a capability approach could possibly answer. Creating a space to dream and become is what some students would like but they are unsure of how to navigate such terrain within the boundaries of extant institutional structures and cultures that currently influence their being and ultimately their becoming. A culture of difference continues to pervade student responses. Unfortunately, difference continues to be seen in a negative light. Moreover, given the

above responses, it appears as though much more could be done with the programme in terms of raising the bar of creativity that may even include an amalgam of courses such as the IT and culinary sections collaborating to start a joint venture project such as an internet café, for example.

5.14 Chapter summary

For the most part, students' lives have been characterised by repeated failure and being excluded from mainstream as a result of their perceived differences. Even within the tertiary environment, the TVET programme itself is regarded on a lower academic tier than the college's other courses and programmes.Programme outcomes for the students are mostly linked to their potential economic benefits for the country as a whole. On the other hand, students may lack some capacity to function in the real world socially. For example, several students, whether former or current, speak of being introverted and shy. Despite such characteristics, the majority of students showed a level of determination to succeed despite the odds.

An important component of this case study was exploring the extent to which students' voices are recognised in policy processes at the meso and macro levels. Interestingly, the former students welcomed opportunities for their voices to be heard while attending the programme. Conversely, the current students did not seem overly concerned about whether they had a voice in such processes. Why is there such a disparity? The fact that the more recent students do not regard their contributions as being important or effective is reason for some concern. What are the factors that are leading to such a growing level of complacency? For the most part the student participants seemed to feel powerless where change is concerned.

Since a becoming ontology and the appreciative inquiry process are both futuristic in nature, understanding what students thought about their own futures was noteworthy. Based on their general responses, the majority of students lack confidence in their abilities to succeed. Interestingly even some of the former students felt this fear of future failure.

Could this mean that they were not adequately prepared? Would a focus on a becoming ontology that promoted capacity building and opportunities to express difference yielded more positive results?

The limited choices available within the TVET programme content also seems to present challenges for some students who may desire to benefit from alternative programme offerings. To this end, the college recognises the issues but lack the power to change such circumstances since the ministry is the main owner of programme resources. This signals a big gap in the policy process that is directly impacting students and other actors at the meso level. Such findings are explored further in Chapter 6 through the responses of the programme administrators.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE OFFICIAL AND LCC ADMINISTRATORS

The perspectives of the institutionalstaff who are involved in administering the TVET programme at LCC were sought in gaining further insights about the factors that influence policy discourses in this environment. It was also important to understand whether a becoming ontology that recognises difference and capability could thrive in such a culture.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy administration of all educational programmes including the TVET at LCC. This government agency is a key partner with LCC in its conceptualisation and delivery. A designate of the ministry's Permanent Secretary was given permission to speak on the agency's behalf. The respondent will be referred to as MPAor Ministry's Policy Administrator.

MPA has an administration background in the technical field and has been assigned to the TVET programme for the past 10 years. The historical experience that has been gained over the years, positions MPA very well to speak on behalf of the programme.

The questions that were posed to MPA mostly concentrated on the policy environment that informs the TVET programme; success indicators; voices of the policy process; how difference is viewed in such a complex context and whether a focus on student becoming could yield more positive long-term results; and the type of future that is envisioned for TVET at LCC. Throughout the interview, an appreciative stance was maintained.

6.1 Views from the Ministry's Policy Administrator – macro level responses

While there are regional frameworks that govern the basic operation of TVET in member countries in the Caribbean, the MPA shared that much of what is executed locally depends to a large extent on the political Minister for the subject of education:

"Basically we are still operating TVET programmes in the territory in an informal way. Right now we have adopted the OECS (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States) framework which is tweaked to each individual territory."

"Basically policy laws depend largely on the Minister. I cannot go further without the Minister's ideas that are then channelled through the Permanent Secretary. Once you understand where the ministry is headed based on the minister then the ministry gets its mandate that is taken to schools for implementation."

It is important to note that TVET has been offered at the secondary level in this school system for about 50 years. In the earlier years the technical focus was mostly on areas like woodwork and metal work. The main objective then as now, was skill building for employability and has always focused on the lower academic tier of students who were not viewed as being capableto excel in mainstream college bound environments. Over the years, stringent policy guidelines were never developed to guide such programmes. Curriculum content was mostly formulated by the particular institution involved in delivery or even by a particular subject teacher. TVET has since extended to tertiary establishments such as LCC but the policy culture has remained unchanged for the most part as noted by MPA.

6.2 The TVET programme at LCC from a policy perspective – influencing factors

The MPA explained that the TVET programme at LCC was an initiative of a former Minister of Education who saw the need to address the growing trend of high school drop-outs who were operating on the fringes of society with very little hope for their futures. The traditional belief that learning a skill would make them employable if they are deemed to have failed in other academic settings continue to inform even such informal policy arrangements as the MPA observed:

"Getting young persons skilled is the desired goal. A lot of them may have been challenged with traditional education. We want them to develop skills to be

productive citizens in society. Not everyone likes chalk and talk and some may prefer hands-on."

I submit that it is insufficient for students to become productive members of society through skills training. Emphasis must also be placed on their overall self-worth and pathways created to explore how these students seem themselves within such microcosms. It may very well be that a gap still exists between desired states and actual states as attrition rates at the TVET programme continue to be quite high, around 50% of enrolment. To that end, the MPA theorised that the *"main college actors are not as involved as they could be"* including having challenges with instructors that are sometimes tardy and detached from students' needs.

The MPA's statement points to one such gap between the ministry and the college in terms of programme ownership. If policies are to take root, ownership must be made clear. Another concern is that of role confusion in terms of focal priority areas between the ministry and the college. For instance, the MPA pointed to the importance of having students set regional examinations to certify their skills. Determining which institution should take the lead is proving to be problematic, which again points to lack of clarity regarding ownership of programme responsibilities:

> *"When we sold the programme this year we indicated that students who could qualify for the C&G exam should have that opportunity. The college was expected to formalise those structures but it never happened."* (MPA).

Unfortunately, as a result of such role confusion, the students in question were unable to benefit from exam certification.

6.3 Voices of policy – the student voice

The MPA was well positioned from the Ministry of Education to speak about the extent to which students from the TVET programme at LCC are involved, or not involved, in policy processes whether formal or informal:

"Right now the students are not really recognised at this level in terms of their input. I do not recall if any sort of consultations were done with students at the policy level."

The MPA did note however that at the meso level, the students were very vocal and provided one such example:

"This year we had some financial challenges and the students from [a smaller sister island) were disenfranchised for a month and could not attend. The other students were not happy and voiced their concerns."

Based on the MPA's statements, it can be inferred that while students may have a voice at the meso level, they are not directly involved in the policy process at the macro level. The MPA did not provide reasons to adequately explain this situation.

6.4 The future of the TVET programme at LCC – views from the macro level

The MPA offered some useful insights that could factor in to the long-term survivability of the TVET programme:

For instance, the MPA made reference to the average number of persons that graduates from the programme each year but did not readily provide numbers of persons who may have stopped attending for one reason or another:

"The programme graduates at least 20 persons each year and it has saved quite a few persons."

It would have also been interesting to have an idea of what might have happened to other students that the programme was unable to save.

MPA admitted that the administration of the TVET programme in a HE environment is unpopular:

"There are some complexities of offering TVET in a tertiary environment. This type of programme structure in a tertiary environment is very rare as they are usually done in further education and industrial colleges."

As rare as this arrangement may seem, in such a micro society, it begs the question, what should the role of the community college really be? Perhaps this could be a topic for further research. Despite such admitted complexities, if administered properly, the TVET programme could even be used as a model for similar sized territories in the Caribbean and even further afield.

The MPA insists that some persons still see the programme negatively:

"At the back of people's mind, the programme is still segregated."

"We are still fighting the stigma of difference. A community college should serve the community by offering self-enrichment courses. The good thing for us is that persons on the 'ground' are committed."

If this situation currently obtains, perhaps the college and the ministry need to devise more innovative ways to market the programme. Perhaps this is an opportunity for the community to become more involved so that its members also feel a sense of ownership. This could also be an opportunity to shift the paradigm about TVET, capability, skill development, building capacity and the ethics of difference. Again a becoming ontology could be the response to address such issues.

The MPA feels confident that the TVET programme is serving a useful purpose as it has made a difference in some students' lives. The MPA also did not offer suggestions on how communities could be re-directed in their thinking about TVET and the traditional stigmas that are normally attached to such educational initiatives:

"We have gotten a sense of self-worth from some former students of the programme who have gone on to do high school certification. One is even doing an Associate's degree. One young man is working at a bank that did our programme."

While the MPA lauded examples of students that have benefitted in positive ways from programme attendance, statistics were not provided about students who dropped out and whether the ministry felt a sense of failure or regret in this regard. While such individuals may have dropped off of the educational radar they are still members of the society that may not feel a sense of accomplishment having not received any skills certification. Unfortunately some of these very students over the years may have even ran afoul of the law but the MPA admitted that no statistics are kept of them.

Given the consistently high rate of attrition among students in the programme over its 10-year history, gaining insights into whether there were any regrets at the policy level about students that were not successful would have been useful.

6.5 Views from LCC's Programme Administrator – meso level responses

The TVET programme administrator at LCC, who will be referred to as TPAhas worked with the programme for the past six years. TPA serves as a programme coordinator and liaison between the ministry, tutors, students and counsellor. TPA had no special training to prepare for this role.

Since the TVET programme is a joint initiative between the ministry and the college, it was important to also hear the views of the college's administrator to understand the various factors that have impacted the programme's existence for the past 10 years. For this reason, the interview questions were centred on the relationship between both agencies; the extent to which the college is involved in the policy process; the programme's worth to LCC and the wider community; avenues for exploring becoming and difference; noticeable gaps that have been identified and the importance of the student voices.

6.6 Specific policy guidance from the Ministry

LCC serves as the implementing institution for the TVET programme and gets guidance from the ministry as TPA noted:

> *"Well my guidance comes from the AS (Assistant Secretary) in the ministry as well as the technical officer who is in charge. It is not something written in stone like a policy. It is mostly through meetings and memos. It is the ministry's programme and I am just facilitating what their wishes are. It is not ours. We won't decide on most things. We will decide on instructors along with the ministry's input. It is mostly the paying of the bills and finances that I am largely responsible for."*

TPA's statement clearly shows that LCC has not fully taken ownership of the TVET programme even though it is housed on their campus. TPA further noted that the college's programmes are kept separately from the TVET programme as the college's subject areas are more advanced. TPA noted however that efforts were ongoing to get TVET students certified through certain examining bodies such as C&G (City & Guilds) as was mentioned by MPA but could not state the status of those efforts. This obviously speaks to a gap in this important area of assessment.

6.7 Programme challenges

TPA identified several programme challenges that could widen the debate as to whether LCC is the best place for the TVET initiative. Such challenges could also serve as opportunities to address these issues in the best interest of all stakeholders, especially the students. To this end, several themes were identified:

6.7.1 Need for greater acceptance of programme at LCC

There seems to be an internal culture of resistance in some areas of the college's main campus that does not augur well for the long-term survivability of the TVET programme:

"I think it can work with cooperation because the main college students behave the same way. We talk down to the TVET students but not to the college students. I have taken a lot of 'flack' for defending them. If something goes missing I cannot say it is TVET student. So I would have an issue when they are singled out."

While the basic tenets of the TVET programme are well intentioned, pockets of resistance could significantly impact the achievement of future goals that are intended to provide more productive life experiences for students.

6.7.2 No student follow-up systems

Even though the TVET programme is now in its 10th year of operation, there are no follow-up systems on students who may have graduated. As a result, it is virtually impossible to conduct a proper assessment of its overall worth:

"It is difficult, we try and we know where some of the students are but we are not doing a good job. There needs to be follow-up in terms of those who graduate. We try to find them to speak at graduations. I am not sure where they are. Some do get in trouble. I noted in the news the other day of one."

6.7.3 Student engagement and attendance issues

TPA spoke to the various challenges that are encountered in the classroom:

"A large number of the students cannot read. Some of the students behave badly out of frustration. When it comes to theory, any theory at all, it shuts them down."

It would seem that students are not properly screened in terms of their capabilities. Instead tutors may only find out about certain academic needs when students have already enrolled. Since the TVET programme is considered as a last resort for its attendees,

admittance standards are quite low. When coupled with the wide age range for acceptance, the issues are even further compounded with attendance problems both on the part of the students and even the tutors who may feel despondent at times:

> *"The age gap among students, 16 – 30, is a big thing. I am not sure what is going on at the high school level. They are sending students out without letting the college know about issues concerning students. The younger they come, the harder it is to get them settled. The programme counsellor has helped a lot. When others (tutors, administrators) feel like they can't go on, he usually finds a way to say let's give them another chance."*

> *"Attendance is a problem sometimes. Even the instructors are tardy sometimes. Our technical lecturers are too technical sometimes."*

6.7.4 Lack of community support

TPA noted the ongoing challenges that the TVET programme experiences due to a general lack of community support. While some of the concerns expressed may be valid, they can also be used as avenues to realise significant change. The overarching issues were concerned with negative stereotyping of programme students in a micro community that is expected to also lend support to students in the programme.

> *"Community support is really needed. When I meet the students out there I try to locate jobs for them. We have so many other persons at the college. The employers often do not feel they need to give the TVET students a chance since there are other technical mainstream students seeking jobs as well. This leaves them open to get involved in other negative behaviours.*

6.7.5 Funding

Obtaining the requisite funding for the effective operation of the TVET programme continues to be a major source of concern for the TPA as it impedes progress as a result of lack of teaching supplies and the inability to update equipment. Consequently, the programme often becomes unattractive for certain students.

Given the global financial setbacks that many countries have been faced with over the past decade, whether financial priority is accorded to certain programme initiatives seems to rest largely at the macro levels of administration. Since the population of learners that the TVET programme is intended to serve is already a vulnerable group, it would be difficult to ignore this subset of individuals within the general population. To do so could prove disastrous in terms of societal impacts in areas such as increased crime and poverty. However, the data is also revealing that a purely economic and skills-based focus may not be sufficient as the social, long-term needs are also critical for overall growth and sustainability.

One could infer from the TPA's statements that the TVET programme faces a number of challenges that range from the macro to the micro levels of its administration. As the college level administrator, TPA is in the unique position of interfacing with most of the programme actors. While this may be considered as an advantageous position in terms of being able to clearly identify programme challenges, TPA's experience at the meso level also speaks to the need for greater collaboration particularly between the institution and its parent ministry.

6.8 Programme success indicators

In line with the appreciative framework to this exploratory case study, identifying success indicators at the college level was also integral to the process. Given the many programme challenges that TPA outlined, it was difficult to produce a list of success indicators. However, TPA did posit that if the issues that were identified could be addressed in a timely manner, the programme could be more beneficial to all of the key players involved:

"I hope that your report and what you are doing can bring about some solutions to chart the way for us to make a difference and try to get more out of the programme."

When compared to the responses of the MPA, the TPA did not appear to be too optimistic about the overall future of the TVET programme in the absence of some meaningful interventions. This current state of affairs signals a gap of sorts between the administration of the programme at the macro and meso levels.

6.9 Insights from the Programme's Counsellor

The programme's counsellor serves as an important liaison between the administrators both at the college and ministry levels, the tutors and students. Ever since the inception of the TVET programme at LCC a counsellor has always performed that pivotal role of connecting the students to their study environment. Such a role is multi-faceted as it involves diagnosing issues, offering possible solutions to problems and providing ongoing general support. To this end, several tutors and administrators have referred to the important work the counsellor performs in bridging certain gaps.

6.9.1 Preparation for the role

The current counsellor (PC) has served the programme for the past eight years. The questions asked were aimed at understanding how the counsellor was prepared for such a role; what the experience has been like to-date; understanding of the policy environment in which the programme operates; ideas for forging deeper connections with the students in ways that will allow them to actualise their full life's potential; and possible views about the programme's future.

A key aspect of counselling is understanding the student and their needs, the counsellor shared:

> *"The majority of students who come to the programme are lacking in self-confidence and also basic social skills. Much time goes in to cultivating their soft skills. As they go*

through the programme the reasons for such deficit behaviours often manifest themselves."

6.9.2 Understanding student needs

This observation confirms what several students have admitted about their lack of self-confidence and being shy. Whether a connection could be made to their repeated experiences with failure in their primary and secondary years as well as how 'differently' they may have been treated as a result, is debatable.

"A typical day in the initial start is one where appointments are made with students and time is taken to learn who they are. Building up their self-esteem and gaining their confidence is important. The idea is to help them focus."

The counsellor's initial approach to the students is observably different from most tutors who tend to mostly concentrate on the curriculum content. When students misbehave, they are then sent to the counsellor as a 'problem solver.' It could be useful for some tutors to also cultivate some skills that could help them to address certain behaviours in a timely manner. This requires a certain level of intimacy with the students. As a result of trust issues, they may more readily share with the counsellor and not necessarily the tutor:

"What I like most is the intimacy with students. You get to see the more developed and mature side of the student and the excitement they take going in to the work force after what they have learnt. You see the trust they have developed and that they can go out and make themselves proud."

Such an optimistic view of the students shows that they have the capacity and capability to transform and become. To gain such confidence levels in them, the counsellor admitted the ability to listen well; to be tolerant and non-judgmental and to relate to each student at his or her level: *"In order to communicate certain truths to the student I have to be able to speak with them in terms that they understand."* To further explain, the counsellor used a very poignant example:

"This example is of a young lady who smoked marijuana and often denied it. One day I was walking on the stairs and smelled a strong odour of marijuana coming from her clothes. I passed and kept going in front of her. I then turned around and asked if she could smell my cologne. I then told her I could smell her marijuana scent. This then opened the door for discourse on her smoking."

PC's experience speaks to the need to address social, possibly life changing issues and behaviours in the programme. In the absence of such forms of support, it will be difficult to curb certain negative tendencies and trends. Again responsibility should not fall solely to the counsellor but extend to other areas of campus life and even the community as a whole. As the adage goes, 'it takes a village to raise a child.'

6.9.3 The policy process

While admitting that TVET policy is still being developed, the counsellor was not in a position to offer much more as it was noted that the ministry is in the better position to answer policy questions. This response seems to suggest that the counsellor is not very involved in contributing to policy conversations outside of the usual staff meetings. Given the unique liaison role that the counsellor holds, I believe this is a missed opportunity to share rich data that has been acquired over the past several years, providing that confidentiality and anonymity of the students are not compromised in the process.

6.9.4 The school is a reflection of the home

In a typical appreciative mode, the counsellor opined that the tutors are doing a good job for the most part but could be more familiar with how different people learn. Admittedly though, many of the challenges experienced originate in the home:

"The school is a reflection of the home. The school system could only do so much. I did not leave my children to the school system to raise. I decided to give the community

assets instead of problems. The community and school system should not be held accountable for what the home should be doing."

This statement appeared to be contradictory to some of the views shared earlier by the tutors and administrators. For instance, some tutors and administrators feel that the community should do more to help stem the rise in juvenile delinquency and general maladjustment to society that largely stems from under achievement in school. The counsellor's views sharply contrast with such thinking and places the onus on the home instead. Unfortunately, many of the students come from broken and single parent homes. In many cases, the working parent, usually the mother, has to work several jobs to 'make ends meet' as the local saying goes. This then points to a wider societal problem that could form the basis for another study but is nonetheless an important factor that is worthy of note.

PC used some other local sayings to reinforce the parent versus community debate:

"The parents are responsible for bending the tree (meaning the student) when it is young."

"TVET is trying to shape the tree when it is old." This could be translated to mean that it is difficult to re-train an older child or student that has been exposed to continuous systemic failure and other social issues.

The counsellor's insights also explain some reasons for the unusually high attrition rates that the programme experiences. However, unlike responses from the tutors, administrators and even the students themselves, the counsellor provided more concrete reasons for students' dropping out of the programme prematurely:

"Sometimes students leave the programme to go to work. There are those who leave for economic reasons to help the home. Some students drop out because they are too

advanced. Others were mandated by the courts to attend. While the skill that some students are learning may be quite different from what they really desire to do."

The extent to which these factors are taken into consideration to help to curb the drop-out rate is unknown as the MPA did not offer any real solutions in this regard.

When asked whether students had a voice to express their concerns about programme issues the counsellor answered in the affirmative. Whether their voices really make a difference seems to be a question that mostly the policy makers at the macro level could answer.

As the interview concluded, PC, shared one other success story about a particular student whose experience in the programme resulted in her having a more positive outlook on life:

"This student had a very serious anger problem. She did not care about anyone simply because no one cared about her. She thought about life as defending herself. She did the gravest of things to others and never thought of the consequences. I came in as a counsellor and point out to her the consequences of her behaviour. We sat down to see what the problem was that caused her to operate in a survival mode. When she saw the ramifications that could result from her behaviour she was a completely different person. One day a guy was misbehaving and she then asked me to tell him what I told her in our counselling sessions. The young lady then graduated and worked before going on to college."

PC's final statements encapsulates the main question of this thesis. The idea of allowing students to see themselves in a better future can serve as a powerful motivator. The counsellor did not only focus on reasons why this student might have acted 'differently' but provided strategies for overcoming such tendencies.

6.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the view-points of the college and ministry's administrators as well as the TVET programme's counsellor. The themes that were drawn out by their responses could be placed along a continuum from a point that is problems based to one that is solutions based. The problems view of the programme mostly focuses on the differences that could possibly result in diminishing returns. On the other hand, a more positive view that embraces solutions would look for opportunities, even in differences, that could enhance capability and thus pave the way for a more nuanced approach to 'becoming.' The thematic relationships identified above could also serve as building blocks in effectively exploring an ontology of becoming within TVET at LCC. To this end, Chapter 7 is critical in understanding the existing discourses that help to inform such relationships.

CHAPTER 7: Analysis of TVET Policy Documents

This chapter presents an analysis of TVET documents that were provided by the LCC programme administrator.

7.1 TVET Programme Reports (2007 – 2014) from LCC

The programme administrator at LCC shared some TVET reports that were compiled between the years 2007 to 2014. Some statistical information was also made available about the programme's operation during that period of time:

Institution	Total No. of Tutors	Trained in teacher education	Untrained
LCC	10	2	8

Table 8 - Tutors in the TVET Programme at LCC – (2007 – 2014)

The statistics on tutors in the TVET programme clearly show that very little emphasis is placed on the professional training of tutors in teacher education. The majority of tutors are industry trained in a particular discipline. The significant lack of trained tutors to deliver programme content signals a possible gap that could significantly impact students in the learning environment.

A thematic analysis of student statistics for the TVET programme at LCC over a 7-year period reveals a number of interesting trends particularly related to attrition rates; student interest, or lack thereof in certain course offerings; marketability of certain courses, including content area and even delivery.

The statistics of actual students registered compared to those who actually completed over a 7-year period revealed a completion rate of 48%. Of the 386 students that registered over those years, 200 did not complete. No statistics were available that gave reasons for non-completion. Unfortunately, as some administrators and even tutors have pointed out, the ministry and the college have not kept tracking systems or follow-up data on these students.

Year	Students Registered	Students Completed	Small Engine Repairs	Wood Work	Plumb-ing	House Wiring	Basic Comp Office Skills	Hotel Rest. Skills	A/C & Refrig.
2006/ 2007	43	*21	6	3	5	9	-	-	-
2007/ 2008	50	25	3	3	4	5	8	2	-
2008/ 2009	33	21	3	2	0	1	7	8	-
2009/ 2010	54	22	0	3	3	6	7	1	2
2010/ 2011	23	13	3	0	3	4	1	2	0
2011/ 2012	73	33	0	0	9	13	5	2	4
2012/ 2013	47	20	0	0	2	3	7	5	3
2013/ 2014	63	*31	9	0	2	10	11	8	3
Totals	**386**	**186**	**24**	**11**	**28**	**51**	**46**	**28**	**12**

Table 9 - TVET Programme Student Statistics – (2007 – 2014)

***Note: Some students were enrolled in two courses in one year.**

An Internet search of the students that graduated from the first cohort in 2007 did reveal some interesting findings of those that unfortunately ran afoul of the law over the years. Of the 21 students that graduated that year, 7 have ended up in the penal system according to local news sites (which are not required to protect the students' identity). Their charges ranged from minor crimes to very serious offences such as battery against a girlfriend; cocaine trafficking; unlawful possession of drugs; burglary; stocking illegal weapons; gun-butting another individual and attempted murder.Of the three students that were deferred that year, two were arrested for stealing a boat and the other was sadly murdered two years later.

Despite graduating from the TVET programme, which was a success indicator, why did these students fall victim to the social ills of society? Is this a demonstrated example of an economic solution, learning a skill, not being sufficient to solve certain social problems that

plague the youth population? Or, as the programme counselor suggests, is the problem too big for TVET to tackle? If this cycle has been repeated over the ten-year history of this programme based on its alarming attrition rates, what could be done differently?

While the responses to these questions may not be easily found, the programme's obviously diminishing returns signals the need for a shift in mindsets on all levels towards one that not only considers the immediacy of student needs but the need for sustainable approaches that work over the longer term. This is what a becoming ontology proposes to do.

It must be noted, however, that the 2007 cohort produced the first student that eventually completed an Associate's degree and is now considering studying at the Bachelor's level. Others from that initial cohort are meaningfully engaged in trades of their choices that range from working in government departments; a sound engineer for a local band; and managing a boat repair business. Moreover, through the years, several students of the programme have gone on to lead useful lives from which they are benefitting as well as society as a whole.

7.2 Level of students' interests – course indicators

The TVET programme statistics also revealed some other points that are worthy of note. For instance, the wood-work programme has been undersubscribed almost since its inception and has not had students enrolled since 2009. In response to this anomaly of sorts, the MPA stated that wood-work tutors are hard to locate in this micro-society. Even if students may have had an interest, as did one of the participants in the pilot, they had no choice but to select another option. In the meantime, the construction industry in the territory continues to grow while labour is continuously imported for construction sites which also includes woodworking jobs.

Comparatively speaking, the house wiring course has seen consistent enrolment over the entire life of the TVET programme. A possibly contributing factor is the tutor for this course has consistently taught in the programme since the very beginning. This tutor is

industry-trained and not teacher trained but has always taken a personal interest in the well-being of students in this particular course. This includes taking students on job-sites and ensuring their employment as much as possible when they graduate from the programme. Should caring for the students' well-being take precedence of being teacher-trained in education? Should TVET continue to allow a certain margin of flexibility in this regard? How could such situations impact future policy objectives? How could a possible becoming ontology that embraces difference and capability address such seeming anomalies that are not in sync with status quo arrangements?

7.3 Determining gender balance in the TVET programme

The statistical data reveals that the majority of students that have been enrolled in the TVET programme over its ten-year history were male. There are several reasons that could be attributed to this fact. Historically, male students in this school system have often been more likely to underperform in certain areas compared to female students. This pattern seems to hold true at the secondary levels where the drop-out rates among male students are significantly higher. This could explain why the students that enter the TVET programme at LCC have been predominantly male. Once the programme expanded in 2009 to include additional course offerings such as culinary arts and computer applications, it was noted that female students tended to enroll more in those courses. It could be inferred then that traditionally the male gender was more likely to enroll in skill development programmes that required more physical labour and this trend seems to have continued.

7.4 Conflicting discourses in the TVET environment

A review of meeting reports over a 5-year period between 2009 and 2014 revealed that the collaborative efforts between the ministry and college was certainly well intentioned. The reports clearly showed that attempts were made to meet on a fairly regular basis to review the status of the TVET programme and to address any issues of major significance. For purposes of this case study, it was important to uncover themes that could possibly tell their own stories of success and failure based on the language of the discourse. For instance, in a 2010 report, a ministry administrator lauded the TVET programme as a *"success from the point of view that there are now 20 individuals who have been awarded*

certificates of competence and are now equipped to compete in the world of work." In this example, the report on the surface was quite positive; however; a review of the enrolment statistics for the given year showed that initially 54 students were admitted to the programme. This meant that at least 30 of those students did not complete, but no mention was made of this fact in the overall report that year.

In another report in 2012, a ministry administrator admitted that *"the programme has always had a history of a high attrition rate and this cohort is no different from any other."* This statement could imply that while the programme's successes have been laudable, it is also important not to lose sight of students that the programme was unable to positively impact. Perhaps this could have also served as an opportunity to discuss reasons for such recurring rates and what could possibly be done to curb such a trend.

In a 2013 report that was recorded this time by the college administrator, areas of concern in the programme were expressed by different actors, including tutors. It was also noted that students did not attend such meetings. At that meeting, the instructors spoke of challenges they were experiencing: *"some students are here because they have no choice; some need special help, some cannot read; some just follow groups and just a few are willing to learn."* One tutor spoke of the students' behavioural issues. Even when she wrote the rules on the board, the students did not adhere to them. They took breaks whenever they felt like. It was a struggle. Another tutor suggested to the meeting that the involvement of more parents, especially fathers could make a difference in the students' lives and levels of interest.

Interestingly, it was only in 2012, six years after the programme's inception, that a concerted effort was undertaken to make certain programme improvements by developing a vision and mission:

> **"Vision statement**:The Technical Vocational Apprenticeship Programme will contribute and assist in building a society that is globally competitive in the technical areas and capable of creating employment and contributing to the improved productivity of its citizens in careers of their choice.

> **Mission statement:**The Technical Vocational Apprenticeship Programme aims to offer skills training and develop technically based students in areas of chosen competence leading towards certification at local and international levels."(LCC TVET Report, 2012)

The main drivers for the programme's vision and mission statement were the global economy; skill development and career choices. Both statements seem to place the notion of nation building at the centre and not necessarily the individuals or students themselves. In essence, this 'new' framework was not entirely different from the traditional *modus operandi*. The main difference is that the mission and vision was now documented. Additionally, an elaborate top-down structure for programme operation was also introduced.

While this structure was designed to bring some order to the TVET programme's administration it would not lend itself to the flexibility that may be required for a possible becoming framework to be operationalised where the voices of policy will be more clearly articulated than what currently obtains. Moreover, inherent in such a structure is the 'hidden' discourse that TVET students must be carefully and even strategically 'managed' to attain desirable programme outcomes.

7.5 Chapter summary

While there are several documents that exist in the TVET environment that speak to the spirit of policy, the discourse is disjointed at best as there is no definitive policy that guides TVET in the HE and FE environment at LCC. The existing education legislation does not clearly outline the country's intentions for TVET in HE, FE or even at the secondary level. Ministerial mandates and policy statements do not place a high emphasis on this particular TVET programme since it is considered to be at the lower end of the education strata. Key drivers of discourse on TVET are concerned with economic advancement and skill development. The general assumptions, based on existing discourses, are that TVET students usually under-perform when compared to their other academic counterparts.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings of this case study in relation to the research questions and existing literature. The chapter also acknowledges limitations of the study and possibly how the study's outcomes could be applied to not only the policy environment of TVET in this Caribbean territory but also as a foundation for further research.

CHAPTER 8: Discussion

8.1 Revisiting the focal points of this case study

This case study explored student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean as a heuristic for understanding the politics of difference. To gain a full appreciation for such a process, it was necessary to address some questions that were as germane to the study's outcomes:

1. What are the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students?

2. How is the concept of student *becoming* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

3. How is the concept of *difference* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students?

4. To what extent are existing policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering students' *becoming* within TVET programmes?

5. To what extent are policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering the understanding of *difference* within the TVET HE population?

6. To what extent are there gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice?

7. How can the student voice enhance policy discourses about *becoming* and *difference*?

The study's findings also examined three possible gaps in the research context: i) between the macro, meso and micro levels of the TVET policy environment in HE; ii) between actual policy discourses and TVET practice within HE; and iii) the research itself and the policy making environment that could possibly contribute to more innovative forms of TVET policy discourses in this small island context.

8.2 Summary of the results from interviews and discourse analysis

This case study demonstrates that existing TVET institutional structures and cultures in higher education and further education in this Caribbean island may have to experience an entire paradigm shift at the macro, meso and micro levels if the tenets of a becoming ontology are to be fully realised. Presently, TVET operates within an environment that places much emphasis on global economic policy drivers and skill-building for youth participants who are seeking career alternatives. Barnett (2012) firmly believes that it is not sufficient for educational projects to be only skills-focused and calls for a type of response that addresses human being in an uncertain world.

Despite the programme's best intentions, through the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Education and Lambert Community College, only 50% of participants have successfully completed graduation requirements over a 10-year period. The results further show that there are underlying social issues that compound the learning environment that are not being solved through economic solutions. Such indicators signal the need to possibly revisit the programme's strategic intent to one that focuses less on students' differences, from a negative view point, and more on their capabilities as a way of unlocking their potential to 'become.'

Mills and Gale (2007) stress the importance of examining how educational policy spaces are constructed, particularly at the macro level, and the extent to which such actions represent social and economic differences. Lingard (2005); Walker (2006) and Lopez-Fogues (2016) also share similar concerns about educational institutions being subsumed by the economics of the day in this globalised era. The idea of "economic competitiveness versus social cohesion" (Zgaga, 2009, p. 176) while fulfilling academic purposes in the higher education environment is one that continues to present challenges for the range of actors that occupy such spaces.

The voices of policy were also an important feature of this study, particularly those of the students. The overall findings indicate that current policy processes and discourses are

largely top-down which will not necessarily augur well from a becoming ontological perspective. While some participants at the meso and micro levels felt that they had a voice concerning programme delivery, it was difficult to ascertain the extent to which recommendations are filtered through to the macro level since much of the policy decision making takes place at that level and has historically been of a top-down nature. To repeat Barnett's (2009) position, "unless the student develops her (or his) voice and has a willingness to speak, her (or his) becoming may be unduly limited" (pp. 435-436). Holdsworth (2003) argues, however, that the onus is really on policy agents to create welcoming structures and cultures that will ultimately create freedom for students to effectively participate.

8.3 A comparison of the study's findings in relation to existing research

Bergson (1922) speaks of the need to have a theory of knowledge to join the theory of life in a revolving motion where one impacts the other. In this case study, the theory of knowledge that was presented specifically spoke to policy discourses; the need to understand how a becoming ontology could be framed in the TVET HE environment and the importance of understanding and appreciating difference within such spaces from a capability position of thinking about human being.

An extensive search of the literature for the past two years revealed very sparse information that linked TVET in HE with becoming, difference and capability. This situation was even more acute within the Caribbean region where a comparative contextual perspective in the literature could have been useful. For such reasons, the findings of this study may even be considered significant and would hopefully help to inform further research undertakings in the future.

8.3.1 Factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students

Gornitzka's (2013) view of the complexity of research into the policy-making world in HE has certainly proven to be true based on the findings of this study. Dissecting the intricate network of relationships from the macro to micro levels that impact the policy environment could prove to be challenging but also useful in understanding the determinants that shape such discourses. For instance Levinson et al. (2009) and Conner et al. (2012) speak of the power building relationships that are formed at the macro level. To further illustrate, while the TVET programme is administered at LCC, the real seat of power is at the ministry level where the sitting Minister for Education almost single-handedly dictates the direction of such programmes.

At the macro level however, an analysis of existing discourses from ministerial reports show that mixed messages are being published about TVET in general in the territory. For instance while the territory's newest technical high school is the ministry's focal point for establishing TVET at the secondary level, the discourse is less clear on how improvements could be made to programmes at the tertiary level such as the programme at LCC so that they are more beneficial particularly for student participants.

Taylor's (2004) suggestion of taking into consideration the interrelationships between texts, cultures, structures and relations in determining key policy objectives was also noteworthy. The appreciative approach to the inquiry process was also helpful in teasing out aspects of such relationships that impact resultant policy discourses. In fact when projected on the following mind-map (Figure 8), the overarching findings revealed that LCC and the MEC have been practicing a problem-based approach to the policy process (Webb, 2014).

Figure 8 - Problem-based approach to TVET

Figure 8 typifies why there has been no clearly structured approach to the development and refinement of TVET policies in the HE context that was researched. While these factors all help to influence policy discourses, they have not necessarily helped to advance programme growth.

Webb and Gulson (2012) propose an emergent view of a policy prolepsis that is really a category of becoming that focuses more on personalised spaces of policy outcomes that pay closer attention to self and identity. In other words, the problem-based view has been tried and has obviously failed based on the picture of diminishing returns that is being painted in the research environment. A becoming policy prolepsis on the other hand (Figure 9)moves the individual student to the centre in a more positive environment that is based on appreciation and capability and freedom.

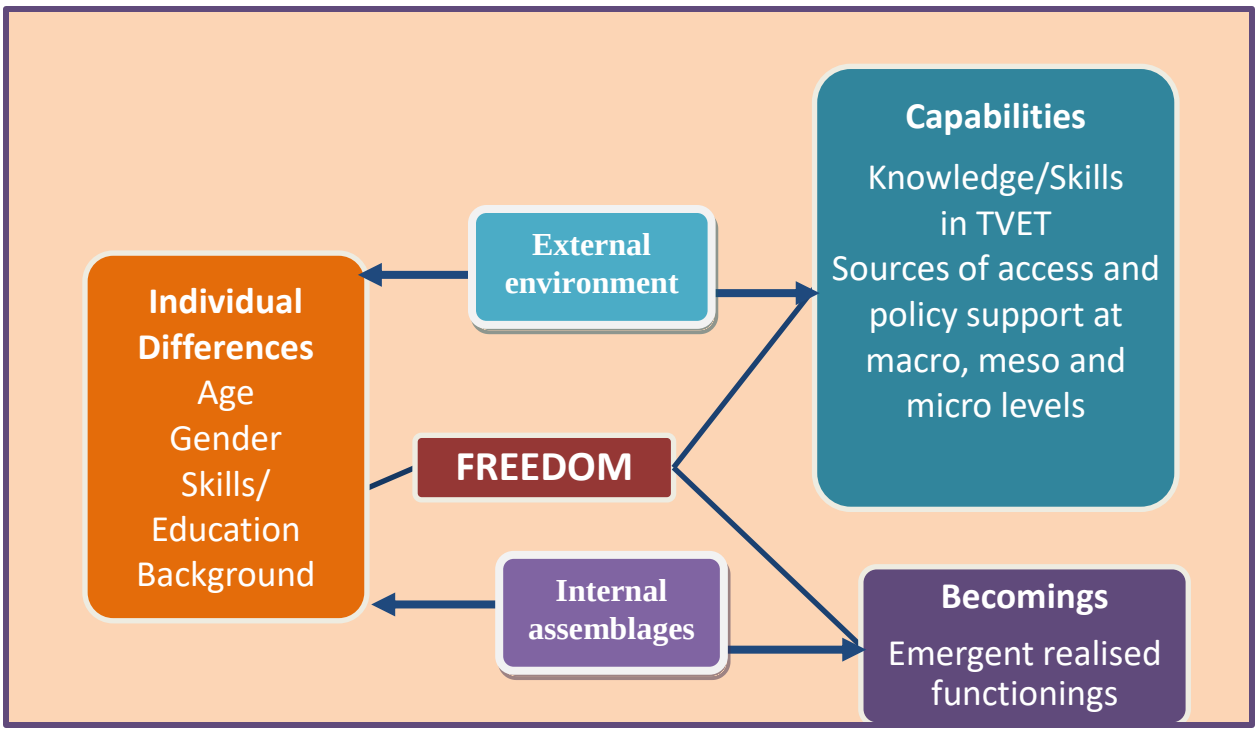

Figure 9 - Proposed framework of Becoming

8.3.2 How the concept of student *becoming* isinterpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students

The concept of becoming is a theoretical construct that focuses on the quality of life of human being in the world. The significance of this Deleuzian philosophical school of thought lies in the idea that an immanent world view brings forth continuous constellations and thresholds of becoming. Such a view embraces difference as a life form and deliberately avoids subjective identities. While becoming has not been widely used in education based on the obvious limited literature findings, the medical field has embraced human becoming with regard to emergent quality of life issues (Parse, 2003; Parse, 2013) with some level of success.

This case study's focus on a becoming ontology was designed to seek an alternative approach to TVET in HE by not only focusing on means (processes, skills, procedures) but also ends (the resultant future life quality of the student participant in such programmes) or, "What becomes?" (Pearce et al., 2012). As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) posit there is a

need to recognise the transforming power of systems that address becoming and difference while breaking with traditionally closed systems.

I asked policy administrators, tutors and students to give their interpretations of the becoming process. The transcription process revealed that while the terminology was unfamiliar to most participants, they mostly linked the idea to individual capacity or capability which is all relational.

Automatically linking perceptions of student becoming to capability was an interesting finding as the research also used Sen's (1999) capability theory as the main link between emergent views of becoming and difference. Underpinning such relationships is the freedom the individual enjoys as a result of not being fettered by unnecessary institutional structural arrangements.

Table 13 is a comparative presentation about how capability is viewed within the TVET environment in HE and FE in the study context:

Thematic comparison of relationships based on views of 'capability'

Macro level Policy administration	Meso level College administration	Micro level Classroom (Students/Tutors)
• Students can learn a skill to become productive members of society. • Students can meet regional certification standards with adequate preparation by their tutors. • The voices of students may not be recognized in the policy process as they may not be viewed as being capable enough.	• Students can thrive if the TVET environment is more conducive to their learning in terms of extant policy and syllabus arrangements, institutional resources, structures and cultures. • Some graduates of programme have accessed further education and have gone on to lead successful lives while others have struggled.	• Lack of confidence in capacity to succeed was a dominant theme among some students whether former or current. • Fear of future failure is also a dominant feeling that also reflects their levels of confidence. • Some students feel marginalised since their voices are often not heard in policy processes.

• The TVET programme at LCC can become more formalized at the policy level in support of students' learning. • A select number of tutors lack the capacity to adequately provide for students' needs in the classroom. This could ultimately impact the capability levels of students as well.	• The extent to which students are considered capable also depends on opportunities available to them in the community at large in terms of jobs and general support of the ministry's and college's efforts. • The programme's counsellor performs a very pivotal role as liaison whose efforts have demonstrated that students are capable of higher achievement with the proper support.	• Limited choices within TVET that would allow them to 'become'.

Table 10 – Thematic comparison of relationships between macro, meso and micro levels based on views of capability and ultimately one's becoming.

The results revealed a natural coupling of the capability framework where learning is viewed as a process of becoming or what Colley et al. (2003) term vocational habitus (p. 471). In other words, a capability model opens windows into an internal world of becoming that values all forms of difference. Essentially what the findings revealed is that it is difficult to separate one from the other even though both concepts are often presented in different frames in the extant literature even though Deleuze and Guattari (1987) seemed to hint at such a possibility by calling for a "new threshold of deterritorialisation" (p. 308) as was noted in Chapter 2. Along such a plane, a becoming school of thought recognizes differences in human capacities that are not bound by entrenched systemic structures.

Perceiving of such a framework within this research site's context may only be realised through incremental changes, programme by programme, as the culture may not readily lend itself to such revolutionary changes. Clarke and Mcphie (2015) found this to be the case when they researched the Scottish model of a becoming policy that was mostly

concentrated on environmental education. As Powell and McGrath (2014) affirm, the capability approach is a practical tool for putting people first rather than the needs of the economy. In this way, issues related to social justice and human rights are brought to the fore in any skills development discourse on TVET.

8.3.3 How is the concept of *difference* interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students

As was noted in Chapter 2, TVET policies in the local education system, whether formal or informal, are mostly designed on a premise of difference that targets underachieving students. Unfortunately, the concept of difference is often interpreted in a negative light as seen in Figure 10. This possibly explains why Burke (2015) makes the case for a "post/structural re-working of difference" (p. 400) that promotes healthy conceptual notions and positive engagement at all levels.

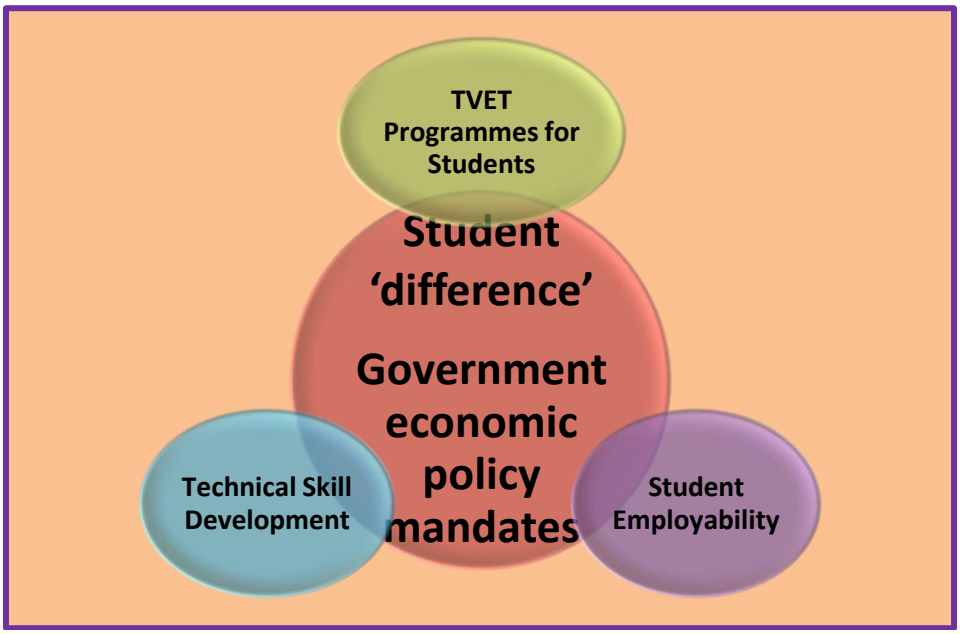

Figure 10 - Current diagrammatical framing of TVET in HE in local context

It is evident from the thematic comparison of relationships between policy designers, tutors and students at the macro, meso and micro levels in Table 11 that the varying perceptions of difference significantly impact the learning environment and possibly programme outcomes. More importantly such views definitely cloud possible avenues for

Thematic comparison of relationships based on views of 'difference'

Macro level Policy administration	Meso level College administration	Micro level Classroom (Tutors/Students)
• Traditional approach to education provision that separates 'mainstream' 'academic' students from other students that may experience academic challenges. • The TVET option for such students is mostly skills based for employability purposes. • While there are no formalized policy structures for this collaborative arrangement with the Ministry and LCC, programme mandates are usually of a 'top-down' nature with direction from the sitting Education Minister.	• The TVET programme at LCC is treated separate and apart from its mainstream programmes. There are separate provisions in areas such as budgets, funding, curricula, tutors and other programme resources. • Student certification is not linked to the college's certification system. • LCC does not 'own' the programme but facilitates its delivery based on the directive of the MEC. • LCC experiences several challenges with the delivery of the TVET programme. • College administrators are unclear about whether their voices are heard in policy matters at the macro level that impact programme delivery at the meso and micro levels. • The future direction of the programme is unclear.	• Some tutors view 'difference' negatively especially where the students are concerned while others view difference in a positive light – an opportunity to create and grow in another direction. • For the most part tutors lack clear policy direction which contributes to feelings of difference in a negative way as the TVET programme is not accorded the same level of importance as mainstream programmes. • Several students whether former or current seemed to have 'accepted' the institutional boundaries that define them. • Neither tutors nor students have a significant voice in policy processes at the macro level.

Table 11 – Thematic comparison of relationships between the macro, meso and micro levels based on views of difference

student becoming in the real world outside of academic institutions such as LCC. This position is supported by May's (2013) argument that uses a Deleuzian perspective on how difference should be ideally viewed from an affirmative standpoint that steers thinking away from traditional status quo arrangements that suppress identities to new pathways of becoming.

Clearly gaps exist between the various levels as a result of a lack of clear policy direction at on TVET at the ministerial level. Bernstein (2003) has also identified gaps between the macro and micro levels of vocationalism that could become even more entrenched where the policy level focuses on mergers and entrepreneurship opportunities while the micro level focuses on skill-building.

While the gap to which Bernstein (2003) refers may not be quite as wide in the study context, there are indicators that trends may very well lead in that direction if industry needs become more of a deciding factor in policy framing. Even at this stage, however, re-contextualising policy frameworks (Jephcote & Davies, 2004) could be a useful exercise at this stage that will give serious consideration to the social side of the policy process which has been an emergent recurring theme throughout the findings of this case study.

The legislation on TVET which was previously alluded to is also quite scant. As a result, it can be inferred that there is not enough will legislatively speaking that could also help to inform policy mandates. Based on these states of affairs, TVET is often delivered in a disjointed manner that has historically supported negative notions of difference that reinforce the politics of misrecognition and diminish individual capabilities (Burke, 2015).

8.3.4 The extent to which existing policy discourses by policy designers are helping or hindering students' *becoming* within TVET programmes

The main intent of any becoming policy should be to celebrate and appreciate 'difference' in individual students. The following diagram, Figure 11, was presented in Chapter 2 to illustrate this point:

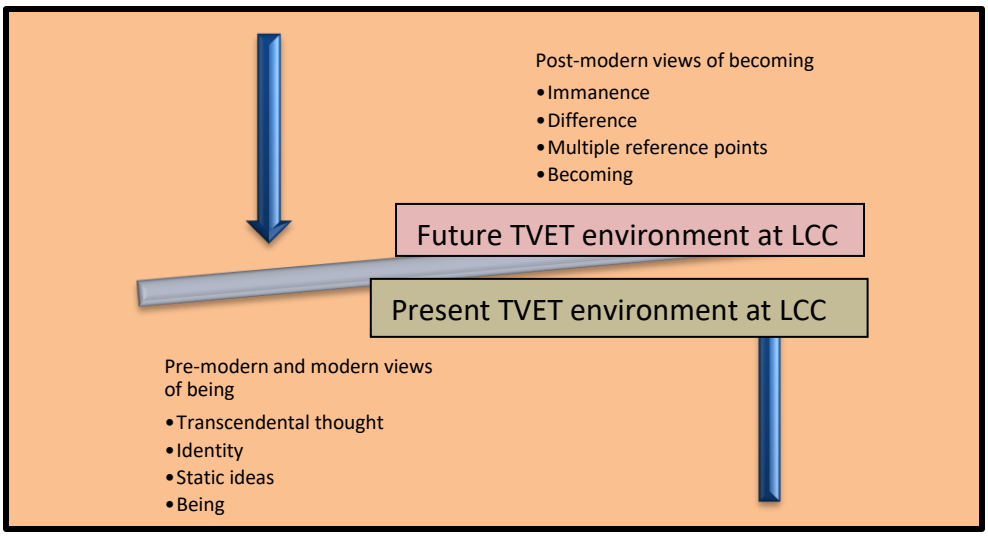

Figure 11 – Future and Present TVET environment revisited

An analysis of the existing discourses by TVET policy designers, though well-intentioned for the most part, clearly shows that such discourses are hindering students' becoming within such programmes.

For instance, in interpreting a Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming ontology, Taylor and Harris-Evans (2016) stress the importance of 'self' and the embracing of 'difference' in such processes, describing becoming as the "endless play of difference." (p. 9). In translating Taylor and Harris-Evans' (2016) view to the TVET policy environment at LCC, quite an opposite picture emerges. While difference is used as a focal point for administering such programmes, it is not the type of difference that is celebrated along an immanent plane of becoming. Rather difference is used as a tool to differentiate, separate and even alienate students. Moreover, while the prevailing contextual discourses do not overtly promote difference, the messages that students are indeed different, with an unintentionally negative connotation, are more subtle but nonetheless embedded.

A further analysis of the current context reveals that some aspects of the TVET discourse are still modernistic as opposed to being post-modernistic. For example, many of the mandates and policy statements that govern the administration of TVET at LCC have not really changed significantly in its 10-year period of existence and remain rather static in

nature – organisational systems are still top-down; the seat of policy and power is still firmly entrenched at the macro level; students are still identified by ability levels and placed on lower tiered TVET programmes to differentiate them from the more academically inclined students that access mainstream tertiary programmes.

More important is what certain policy discourses are *not* saying about programmes such as the TVET initiative at LCC that gives some reason for concern. Pearce et al. (2012) acknowledge the myriad of issues that could surround a philosophy of becoming in the policy environment where discourses may lend themselves to subjectivity and difference; power networks and how to reconcile new ways of thinking with emergent ones. These are also findings for the most part in the study context of TVET HE as well: the existing legislation – The Education Act (2004) and Education Act (2016) - makes no significant mention about TVET administration in a tertiary environment. If such policies are not enshrined in legislation, their sustainability over the longer term becomes questionable.

Since there are no formal policy structures on TVET, there is much policy borrowing from regional institutions such as CARICOM and the OECS. Unfortunately, the language and intent of such structures are not always suited to the unique contextual arrangement that exists between LCC and the MEC where the TVET programme is concerned. Such systems in Ozga and Jones' (2006) view, while recognizing the importance of TVET in a globalized world, may also operate on limited forms of evidence that are country-specific which may lead to more social exclusionary practices. What Bullen et al. (2004) argue for instead is a more nuanced approach to policy that takes into consideration all the main tenets related to economy, society, structure and agency (p. 10). Such an approach encapsulates the tenets of a becoming ontology as well.

An analysis of documents from the Ministry of Education (MEC) and Lambert Community College reveal areas where there are disconnects. For instance, the reports that are generated from LCC places ownership of the TVET programme in the domain of the MEC as the programme coordinator at LCC noted they only "facilitate" the delivery of the

programme but it is really the ministry's. On the ministry's end however, interest seems to liemore in promoting TVET at the secondary level.

Singh et al. (2013), borrowing from Basil Bernstein's work, call for a recontextualisation of policy discourses where the apex of power and control relations is shifted from structures that maintain ineffective status quo arrangements to ones that are more receptive of emergent and diverse ideas about such processes. Such processes will not only consider regulative and instructional discourses but also moral frameworks as well.

8.3.5 The extent to which policy discourses by policy designers help or hinder the understanding of *difference* within the TVET HE population

As Taylor (2016) suggests, any attempt to analyse policy must take into account the interrelationships between texts, cultures, structures and relations as key determinants of the policy process. Historically the academic discipline of vocational education itself has unfortunately been built around a culture of segregation and difference. For the most part, difference has most often been associated with underachievement; failure and the need for students that fit such categories to 'learn a skill' that would at least make them employable. In acknowledging the challenges surrounding vocationalism and difference in higher education, Grubb (2006) suggests that policy should be concerned about selecting the most workable form that benefits actors.

8.3.6 Language of discourse

The government's mandate to administer TVET within a higher and further education setting clearly has a skills-based focus that is driven by economics. The population of students that such a programme is intended to serve, however, is also in need of social solutions to their needs. For example some students may enroll in the TVET programme to learn a skill but may still run afoul of the law since such an individual might be mal-adjusted to society as a result of other social issues that are often associated with

difference and failure. This thesis argues that if training is also centred on students' becoming over the longer term, it should consider both economic as well as social aspects of a person's well-being. In such a model, students will not be delimited by structures and cultures of difference that promote deficit thinking but would rather be exposed to limitless possibilities for their futures-driven capability thinking.

Structural issues

The way in which TVET has been conceptualised in most countries in the Global North and South arguably contributes to many of the resultant challenges that are often experienced from the macro to micro levels and even beyond institutional walls to students' lives after attendance. Such challenges become even more acute in small contexts such as the one researched. To this end, Macfarlane's (2012) higher education policy map that was alluded to in Chapter 2 paints a very vivid picture of the many crowded educational spaces in which policies are formed. Clearly missing from the map is the actual lived student experiences which may be difficult to represent given their emergent qualities. When such a map is translated to the TVET environment at LCC, the policy lines become even more blurred when these two structures merge. Spöttl (2013) speaks of the 'permeability' factor or the extent to which TVET can effectively function within a HE framework given their different orientations. Maclean (2007) also acknowledge the challenges that are involved in harmonising TVET within traditional HE settings.

The findings show that such structural issues are presenting major challenges for policy designers of the system. While it is admirable to provide further education opportunities to the students of the programme, the site of knowledge even though it is a community college, is one that promotes difference in a negative sense for the TVET learner population as they are viewed as being 'inferior' and not as capable as 'mainstream' students.

Within the TVET structure itself at LCC the reporting mechanism is one that is very top-down where the ministry or the policy making level is placed at the apex and the students are at the very bottom. The structure also reveals that much of the reporting and

interrelations occur at the meso level between tutors, coordinators and counsellors. It is unclear from the map the extent to which concerns or even suggestions from the students get filtered to the top.

As an alternative to such a highly vertical, and even inflexible, model, Könings et al. (2005) suggest what they call a combination-of perspectives (COOP) model that combines the perspectives of designers, teachers and students in a flatter, almost circular structure. Such a structure could certainly augur well for a becoming ontology as it places the students closer to all programme actors in ways that could more effectively address perceptions and even differences.

Cultural issues

While policy designers may think they are helping to solve educational problems through such mechanisms, the seemingly, though unintentional, negative discourse that surrounds the TVET environment often lead to entrenched politics of misrecognition (Burke, 2014). What is needed, according to Burke is for the concept of difference to be re-imagined "not as a problem to be regulated" …. "but as a critical resource to reflexively develop collective and ethical participation in pedagogical spaces." (p. 400). For this to occur, a radical shift in institutional cultural practices must also take place.

There was much evidence in this case study that supports the view that policy discourses by policy designers of TVET unintentionally hinder the understanding of difference based on the typology to which Burke (2014) refers. Unfortunately, this practice dates back several years. In the Alexander and Dawson Report (2005) on the role that TVET plays in special education in the territory, the language of difference and its overly negative connotations is quite obvious.

Sadly, this type of discourse from the macro level then feeds into programmes at the meso and micro levels. From this report example, difference is seen as a challenge to overcome and not necessarily as a useful resource along a plane of immanence and becoming. Twelve

years later, the language of TVET policy discourse has not shifted too much in a positive direction. At a speech the Education Minister made at a UNESCO Conference in Paris in 2015, under the theme "Creating a Culture of Excellence", mention was made of the territory's first "true technical high school" being recently established, but the TVET programme at LCC was not mentioned. Such actions may inadvertently send the wrong message that the tertiary initiative at LCC is not as important as other TVET offerings and further cements perceptions of difference that do not promote students' well-being or their ultimate becoming.

As important as TVET's economic contribution might be, however, the case study found that there were significant challenges related to funding.

When all of the contributory factors are considered, and even despite the government's best intentions for education, there will always be that subset of students, such as those enrolled in TVET at LCC that may not neatly fit into any of the current programme offerings. To this end, the system does not seem adequately prepared to address some of their needs. This is where thinking along lines of immanence, becoming and capability could possibly address these mostly social concerns as the economic solution that has been repeatedly practiced in this system is seemingly in need of a complete policy review.

Given the multiplicity of issues that converge on such policy experiences, Ball (2013) calls for more democratic control of such processes where more recognition and appreciation is given to policy actors, societal needs and diversity.

8.3.7 Gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice

Bernstein (2003) speaks of an obvious gap that exists in vocationalism between the macro and micro environments where the former is concerned with corporate mergers and growth and the latter on skills training for entrepreneurship opportunities. In the study context the picture of such a gap is painted somewhat differently.

Lack of clear policy structures

At the macro level, there are gaps in policy processes as much of TVET is administered in an informal way. The ministry's policy representative alluded to this fact and the tutors themselves confirmed such a gap as there are no clear policies that feed into curriculum plans.

Difference between macro level and meso level expectations

There is also a divide between TVET programme expectations at the macro level and what is actually experienced in practice at the meso and micro levels. For instance the MPA stated that the TVET programme graduates at least 20 persons per year and is saving quite a few persons. No statistics were provided about the number of students that may have dropped out of the programme. Very little mention was made of the challenges that the college face in administering the programme as the MPA believes that the community college should serve the community by offering self-enrichment courses. On the other hand, the college administrator, while acknowledging that the programme is a good one, also spoke of the need for more support in general from the macro level in terms of increased funding; proper policies; follow-up systems; community support and more innovative forms of student engagement.

Lack of clear communication lines

Another gap that was identified was the lack of clear communication between micro and meso level actors and macro level policy makers. At the meso level, the college administrator lamented that not enough meetings are held to discuss issues that may arise. Several tutors also shared that they sometimes had to solve problems on their own. Another tutor stressed the importance of getting proper feedback in order to identify areas that may need attention.

Communication also extends to the students. While there is much contact while students are attending the programme, there are no follow up systems in place to track what happens to them. In a world of becoming, the students' lives even after the programme is also a part of the overall meaning making process.

Teacher education certification gap

In progamme reports between 2007 and 2014 it was noted that 10 tutors served the programme but only two were professionally trained in teacher education. This raises other questions as to whether a tutor that is industry-trained in a particular field could adequately prepare students for not only the world of work but for lifelong learning opportunities. The teachers themselves acknowledged this very important gap. Majumdar (2011) calls for the pursuit of relevant teacher education approaches in TVET as a way of enhancing student learning. Such measures are necessary to reflect the changing paradigms in today's knowledge society, largely as a result of globalisation.

The gap between research and policymaking

An important observation Plank (2011) makes is the gap that could possibly exist between research and policymaking where expectations may differ between researchers and policy makers. Plank (2011) even suggests the need to sometimes strike a balance as a way of not compromising the integrity of the research. In the case of this research undertaking, prior approvals were received from both the Ministry of Education and Lambert Community College. This does not suggest that challenges may not arise in accepting the research findings in its entirety. Given the sensitivities that could exist in such a small context, an appreciative approach was used to help to bridge such gaps and provide a more nuanced framework of understanding as opposed to other more hard-line quantitative approaches. Moreover, since TVET is a very under-researched area in the localeducation system, and given the important focus of this case study on the policy environment and its likely contributions, the gap between the research and the policy environment may not be very wide.

8.3.8 Can the student voice enhance policy discourses about *becoming* and *difference*?

Barnett (2009) asserts that "unless the student develops her (or his) voice and has a willingness to speak, her (or his) becoming may be unduly limited" (pp. 435-436). One of the voices of policy that this research was keen to address was that of the students given the centrality of their roles in discourses about becoming and difference. For these reasons, questions about their voices in the policy process were asked and yielded a variety of responses.

Several inferences could be drawn from the participants' responses. On the micro level of the students the general view is that their voices should be heard in policy processes that impact them. While their tutors generally agree that students should have a voice, others also admit that they may not necessarily be heard at the policy level. In fact the MPA confirmed that students' voices are not really heard at the macro level where it really matters.

The current state of affairs suggests that TVET at LCC is still very much set within an entrenched policy mindset that dictates leadership from the top. Foucault and Miskowiec (1986) speak of the need to create heterogeneous spaces for policy voices to be heard. O'Shea et al. (2012) caution, however, that students who transition from vocational settings to a higher education environment may be treated differently. This issue may be even more acute in this case study as the LCC TVET students have been placed in the HE environment as a result of a collaborative understanding between agencies, but are not often considered a part of that environment at times, depending on whose point of view is solicited.

There is a push from different countries in the Global North and South for more student voices to be heard in policy processes (for example Smyth & Hewitson, 2014; Ryan, 2011). Within the Caribbean context, subtle changes are being noted as well, as in the case of the recently introduced TVET policy in Trinidad & Tobago that calls for increased student

involvement. Based on the findings of this research, educational structures and cultures will need to undergo some level of change to fully appreciate the importance of the student voice in policy processes.

8.4. Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the main findings of the case study in relation to the thesis and supporting questions as well as the extant literature. A becoming ontology that is supported by a capability framework seems to offer some hope in this regard. The key to capability (Sen, 1999) lies in the freedom that such systems allow students to become despite their differences.

CHAPTER 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1 An explanation of the results of the case study

This case study explored student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean as a heuristic for understanding the politics of difference. The research examined the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro levels as understood by policy designers, tutors and students. It also explored how the concepts of Gilles Deleuze's ontology of difference and becoming are understood by these actors and the extent to which policy discourses help or hinder such processes. Amartya Sen's capability theory was used to further explore systemic linkages that may or may not support a becoming framework. It was also important to understand the gaps that exist between these two theoretical perspectives as they related to TVET policy and practice in this micro-context. A key point of convergence for both theoretical persuasions was the pivotal role that freedom must play in students' possible becoming. The extent to which the student voice could enhance discourses about becoming and difference was also an important consideration.

Cooperrider's appreciative approach to inquiry (AI) was used as a way of focusing on the positive aspects of the research environment that could contribute to its future growth. Given the sensitivities related to difference that are often attached to the TVET environment in this context, the AI approach was determined to be the most suitable.

The study was primarily based on an *a priori*assumption that the organisational cultures and structures upon which TVET in HE and FE is built in the Caribbean context are inflexible and resistant to change. Another assumption was that the concept of becoming might be too abstract to embrace in terms of actualising its potential benefits.

The results only partially support the inflexibility premise about organisational change. The responses from meso and micro level actors reveal that there is a willingness to embrace changes that could lead to more successful programme outcomes. The challenge

is to convince policy makers at the macro level that a different approach to TVET in the HE and FE environment that focuses more on students' becoming and less on economic viability might be more beneficial.

Perhaps most important, based on the study's results, is the way in which becoming should be understood and developed as a part of the policy process. Interestingly, even though the study's focal point was an exploration of student becoming, the results revealed that it must be closely aligned to a capability framework that is undergirded by freedom of opportunity to be truly effective. In fact when respondents were asked about a possible becoming ontology, several of them linked it to students' capabilities or capacities. In other words, 'becoming' is a mindset or even a culture that must be developed. Once such a culture is developed the capability framework provides a blueprint on which to base the realisation of a becoming theory. Such a framework provides for freedom of choice and acceptance of difference.

9.2 Importance of the study's findings – closing the gaps between research and practice

The findings of this case study were quite insightful to the extent that they were able to address identified gaps in the literature as well as gaps in the TVET policy environment: i) between the macro, micro and meso levels of the TVET policy in HE and FE in this micro context; ii) between actual policy discourses and TVET practice within HE and FE; and iii) the research itself and the policymaking environment. An important consideration in the literature on *becoming* and *difference* was that of the student's voice and how it influences or is influenced by TVET policy discourses in the HE and FEenvironment.

The current model of using TVET as an economic response to student difference as currently obtains in most contexts is not the most effective strategy. While TVET serves a useful role in skills training, social concerns must also assume a central role. The becoming ontology that was explored in this study provides opportunities for freedom of choice that views difference as a resource and not a challenge. From a theoretical premise however,

the concept of freedom which is central to a becoming ontology is viewed differently between Deleuze and Sen. For Deleuze, freedom is seen as life itself which is closely linked to individuation; whereas Sen views freedom as being expressed within the confines of institutional boundaries that also define capability and certain adaptive preferences. In other words, freedom takes on an internal form as well as an external form. For a becoming ontology to be effective, a hybrid view of freedom that draws from both perspectives could be considered as a real possibility in supporting emergent thinking within the TVET HE and FE environment.

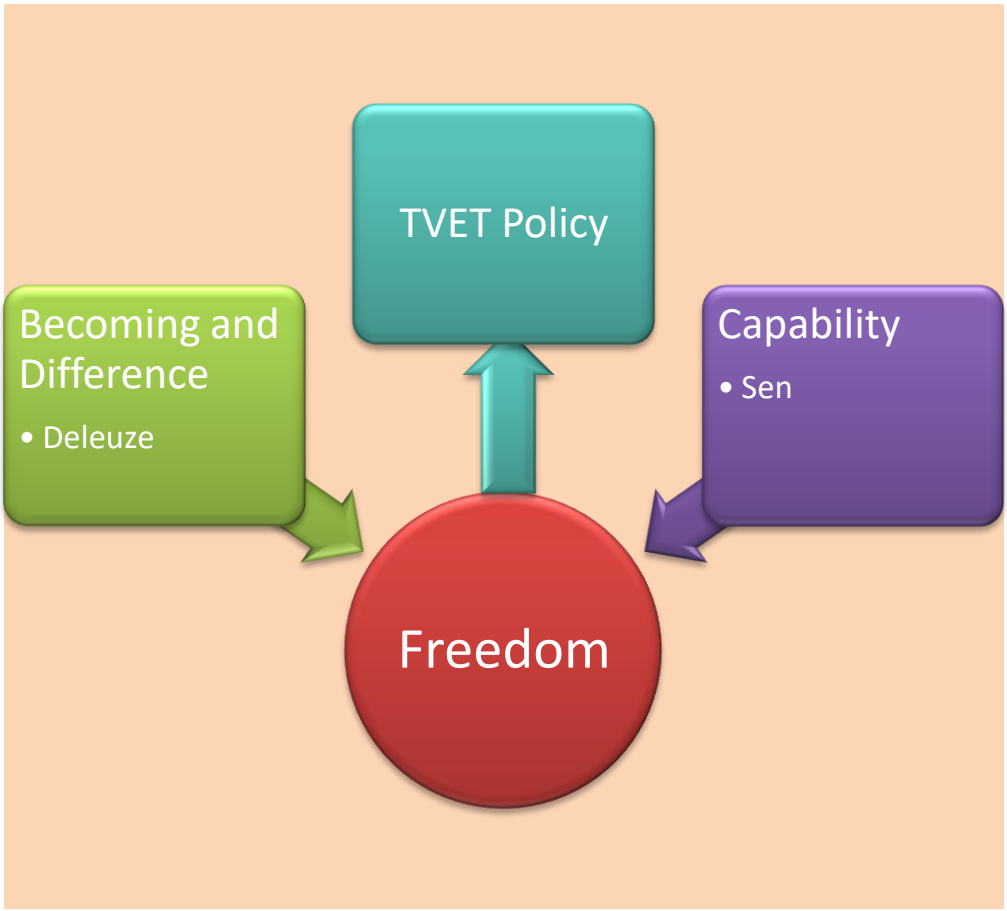

Figure 12 – A hybrid view of becoming, difference capability and freedom

TVET policy discourses should not be static but should reflect ever-changing realities including the voices of actors, particularly those of the students. More importantly, according to Ball (1997), how we engage with the collective identities of actors in the

process as the interplay between interests and identities could be quite complex. The AI approach to this study revealed many beneficial results of having had a TVET programme of its kind within the HE environment in this context over a 10-year period. Within a becoming framework that recognises difference and capability, it will be necessary to examine the structural and cultural environment in which policy discourses emerge. Involving the voices of actors at all levels of discourse – macro, meso and micro - will no doubt become an integral part of such a policy process.

Teacher education training in TVET is critical in gaining a full appreciation of the nuances that characterise such environments. While it may not be possible to transform an entire educational system, the TVET programme at LCC is a good place to introduce the tenets of a possible becoming ontology through incremental changes at the curriculum level. The intent, according to Naidoo (2004), is to reduce social stratification and difference. There is a need for LCC to forge closer ties with its TVET and mainstream programmes within its institution. Maclean and Pavlova (2011) see merit in linking both along a socio-political, epistemological and human development continuum which is quite similar to a becoming ontology.

9.3 Implications or practical applications of the study

Tight (2004) identified two critical areas from an analysis of higher education research: 1) some researchers are not inclined to make their theoretical findings explicit enough; and 2) those researchers who do make their findings explicit tend to be more from the social sciences. The latter tends to be a common trend within the Caribbean region where certain academics may have conducted research that is based on the local context but it is often not widely shared even within the confines of the education environment for various personal, social or even political reasons.

The results of this case study certainly have practical applications not only at the policy level, but also at the meso and micro levels as they are cross-cutting with relatable implications. For instance, upon the conclusion of the data collection phase of this study, it

was learnt that the current TVET programme has been suspended so that it could be revamped to reduce the attrition rate and increase productivity levels of students.

Sadly the study context has since been severely impacted by two Category 5 hurricanes that caused widespread damage across the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean. This has led to a major disruption of students' educational programmes. As the country rebuilds, it is also a good opportunity for restructuring TVET policies and programmes. A practical focus on student becoming will hopefully create even better avenues of support for TVET students and can even serve as a follow-up mechanism to determine students' future well being.

At the policy level, the freedom to become will help to free policy makers from creating policies and programmes that are not sustainable due to lack of strategic involvement from key actors. In essence, a systemic shift is required to change such mind-sets. Further, not much emphasis has been placed on researching the TVET environment over the years of its relatively young existence in the study context.

While the case study used a particular TVET programme as a focal point, the implications of the study's findings extend beyond the programme itself and could certainly prove beneficial in other areas. For these reasons, a community of practice for local researchers could assist in closing the many gaps that have been identified between policy and practice, not only in TVET but in education in general as there are obvious linkages throughout the system.

9.4 Recommendations based on study's findings

9.4.1 Ministry of Education and Culture (Policy)

Chapter 7.11 outlined some critical concerns of the current policy process. To address the concerns identified, I would recommend some possible courses of action: There is an urgent need for government and other critical stakeholders to develop a definitive policy

structure that guides TVET in the HE and FE environment at LCC. Such a policy structure should link all levels of TVET currently offered at the tertiary level. This linkage should also extend to the secondary school level where programme mandates are currently disjointed.

Government should also amend areas of the country's education legislation to reflect clear intentions for TVET in HE, FE and even at the secondary level. The Education Ministry should ensure that its ministerial mandates and related policy statements place TVET in a higher profile on the education strata. Key drivers of discourse on TVET should not only be concerned with economic advancement but also about whether students are equipped enough to be functional in their daily lives beyond the walls of HE and FE. Further, there is a need to change the language of discourse on TVET to a more positive tone in order to dispel the myths and negativity that currently characterise such educational offerings.

Executing policy from a becoming framework will certainly require proactive changes in the areas outlined above. As Ball (1993) posits, it is important to have an amalgamation of macro, meso and micro level structures in the analysis of education systems and policies that must also take into account the lived experiences of those for whom such systems are designed. One example of good practice that could be adapted to the local context is the Scottish higher education system that recently enshrined a becoming philosophy in its educational policy on *Learning for Sustainability* (Clarke and Mcphie, 2015). The new policy introduces novel ways of thinking about sustainability education in terms of practice; explicit forms of communication; the teaching and learning environments as well as the inclusion of experiential stories from learners as they adapt to a world of becoming.

9.4.2 Lambert Community College TVET Administration

The whole concept of difference was perhaps most evident in the challenges that were outlined by the college's TVET administration. They included the general lack of acceptance of the TVET programme within the college's mainstream academic environment; ineffective follow-up systems to chart student progress; sub-par student

engagement and attendance; general lack of community support and lack of funding. The results clearly showed that the programme's administrators were overwhelmed by the many issues with which they were faced. Trowler (2014) acknowledged the challenges that sometimes plague non-academic staff in such settings by noting that their voices tend to be silent in the daily discourse and may be even ignored or devalued.

Again, a becoming framework that recognises difference and capability will also demand changes to such extant systems which may prove to be counterproductive. It would therefore mean that the administration of LCC must demonstrate genuine ownership of the TVET programme if the college is to fulfil its mandate of service to the community. Using the AI framework, opportunities exist for the college's administration to co-create more sustainable FE TVET programmes through the forging of closer linkages with local communities, private sector industry partners and government. Such an undertaking will require various outreach initiatives that project TVET in a positive light.

The current post-hurricane re-building phase of the country allows for such undertakings to flourish as there is an upsurge in the demand for many persons in skilled areas, particularly in the building industry. Despite such opportunities for work, young persons, especially young men, between the ages of 20-35 are increasingly becoming victims or perpetrators of violent crimes against each other. This current state of affairs signals that many young people feel hopeless about their future. A becoming ontology could help in reversing such a negative trend by placing the students' social needs at the centre of policy initiatives.

9.4.3 TVET Tutors

A comprehensive summary of how tutors viewed TVET in HE and FE in the future was presented in Chapter 4. Many of the themes that arose from tutor interviews were cross-cutting from micro to macro levels. Out of their concerns, I recommend the following:
The partner institutions, Ministry of Education and LCC, along with key industry players, should market TVET in HE and FE in ways that will attract more participation. Actors in

the process must make a concerted effort to reach communities and educate their members about not only the economic but also the social value of TVET to individual student participants and to communities as a whole. This is one way of breaking existing stereotypes of difference and viewing TVET through becoming and capability lenses. Actors must also find ways to increase financial, human and technical resources that will ensure the sustainability of TVET in the future.

As was earlier noted teacher education training is critical component in raising the profile of TVET in the study context. Presently, tutors that teach in the TVET programme have varying levels of professional training and capabilities that often result in different outcomes for the students and the overall programme objectives. LCC should make teacher education training mandatory for HE and FE tutors specialising in the field of TVET.

LCC and the Ministry of Education could collaborate even more along that plane of convergence of which Deleuze speaks that is necessary for any becoming ontology to take root. Along such a plane, ideas become fluid and could flow from any direction including those of tutors who are in the best position to help with policy formation and implementation as they interact with students on a regular basis.

May (2003) reminds us of the limitless possibilities that concepts of a Deleuzian becoming could produce in exposing us to what is really important in our lived experiences. The tutor is certainly an important part of this equation in helping to transform policies and curricula in ways that could impact students' lives in more productive ways.

> *"I shall argue that the policy technologies of education reform are not simply vehicles for the technical and structural change of organisations but also mechanisms for reforming teachers [tutors], and for changing what it means to be a teacher [tutor].....This is the struggle over the teacher's [tutor's] soul"*(Ball, 2003).

That struggle for the tutor's soul, as Ball succinctly states, is critical in trying to advance a system of becoming, difference and capability.

9.4.4 TVET Students

This study's focal point was about TVET students and their becoming within a higher education environment that has historically used difference as a defining characteristic. In attempting to shift the current thinking to one that embraces freedom and capability it was necessary to also identify the gaps that impact the students as well. One such gap was the lack of student voices on important policy issues that impact them:

> *"I thought it was important for my voice to be heard. I do not think we were stopped from sharing our opinions. I just do not know if we were taken seriously. I think if students had a greater input on how the programme was designed in certain areas that could have made a difference. Some found certain areas boring and dropped out as a result." (Asha)*

It is evident from the study's findings that young people feel powerless to influence policy changes in their TVET environment. The advocacy approach on behalf of young people that Smyth and Tierney (2003) suggest could reap dividends. In such a model other key players involved in their lives will act on their behalf to promote a platform from which their voices could be heard. Such forms of advocacy could include the formation of civic groups within communities that are empathetic to young people's desires for advancement in life. At the micro level tutors could encourage their young students to mobilise in meaningful ways by actively examining areas of TVET policy they wish to improve. The Ministry of Education and LCC should also give students a voice at board meetings and other avenues for communication where students feel free to express their opinions. In essence, such a model of partnership promotes involvement at all levels, including the students.

9.5 Using Appreciative Inquiry as a blueprint for innovative change in TVET

Table 13 summarises many of the salient points that have been made in this chapter in consideration of a possible becoming policy framework for this small Caribbean territory as it grapples with the politics of difference. It also presents a blueprint to illustrate how an

AI framework could be effectively utilised in creating opportunities for sustained change in TVET.

Table 13 – Using AI as a blueprint for innovative change in TVET

TVET Stakeholders in study context	Discovery Appreciating "The Best of What Is"	Dream Envisioning "What Could Be"	Design Co-Constructing "What Should Be"	Destiny Sustaining "What Will Be"
Ministry of Education and Culture	Provides some funding for TVET programme Continuously seeks ways to accommodate differently abled students through TVET Supports collaborative opportunities with partner agencies such as LCC for the benefit of students and community	A national TVET policy that clearly stipulates the value of TVET from secondary to tertiary levels Amended legislation in Education that supports TVET More funding for TVET programmes Increased agency partnerships	Embracing philosophical constructs such as a becoming ontology that sees difference in a positive sphere through changes in curricula design Ensuring that tutors, students and other community stakeholders are included in policy processes	Implementation of follow-up systems that track TVET programme growth; particularly its socio-economic impact A sustained effort is made to change the culture of institutions that provide TVET such as LCC to one that accepts difference and supports becoming The ministry fully supports the on an ongoing basis in its TVET partnership endeavours
Lambert Community College	LCC administered the TVET apprenticeship programme for 10 years Institutional mandate of meeting community needs	The TVET apprenticeship programme is fully accepted as a part of the institution's overall programme options Partnerships between the Ministry and other TVET stakeholder agencies are strengthened	Ensuring that the college's administrative and tutorial staff understand the value that TVET brings to the community by raising its profile within the institution Actively seeking ways to strengthen community partnerships Ensuring that TVET students feel included and not excluded from the institution	Proper mechanisms are put in place to ensure that TVET continues to be an attractive option Students are able to see clear pathways for their advancement in TVET from the certificate to the degree level Effective follow-up systems for the sustainability of TVET

Tutors	Most tutors are committed to helping students to achieve Tutors work with very little resources in some cases	Tutors' voices are heard in policy decision-making Tutors are fully equipped with the equipment needed to be more effective in the classroom Tutors are fully trained and competent to deliver taught courses	Seeking opportunities to expand their tutorial roles in TVET through action research on topics that are of mutual value. Demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with other stakeholders in raising the profile of TVET through communities of practice	Tutors are fully supported by the college administration and the ministry in imparting knowledge to TVET students Tutors are given the freedom on an ongoing basis to think outside the box and embrace different concepts such as a becoming ontology
Students	The majority of students appreciate that they have been given an opportunity through TVET to lead purposeful lives	Students' voices are heard in policy decision-making	Developing a higher level of self-esteem and understanding how a TVET trajectory could change their future lives for the better Mobilising in ways where their voices are respectfully heard on TVET matters and their future well-being	Students feel as though they have the freedom to become all that they can be on a sustained basis Students are continuously supported by the college and ministry in expressing their voices
Community (parents, civil society)	Support the need for TVET as an alternative education stream	More community involvement especially in the provision of apprenticeship opportunities for students	Engaging with TVET institutions in positive ways that make a difference in the lives of students.	The social stigma that is attached to TVET is significantly reduced.

9.6 Personal reflections on the impact of the EdD on my own professional practice

In exploring a possible becoming policy of TVET in a HE and FE environment through this case study, the experience also opened a channel to depths of my thinking that I thought were unreachable. While the study's outcomes were the product of this journey of

discovery in TVET, equally important was the process that I went through to get to this point. Lincoln and Guba (1990) underscore the importance of recognising both.

As a former teacher and more recently educational administrator, I always had an intense desire to pursue research at the doctoral level as a way of contributing to existing knowledge or even creating new knowledge in the process. In many ways I was in unchartered territory as the research on TVET, particularly in a Caribbean context, is quite slim. This was even more of a challenge when considering ontologies such as becoming and difference. Nonetheless, I was not daunted by this wilderness experience at timesbut tried to stay focused despite many odds – studying in a small island context; navigating the role of insider-researcher, and managing competing professional and personal priorities.

My choice of AI as a research methodology allowed me to explore my own power of imagination into a possible world of becoming in TVET in my research context and even further afield. This approach allowed me to gain fresh insights from the research participants in socially innovative ways that were not judgmental about difference. In essence, AI opened a window into an emancipatory world that questions taken for granted assumptions about the people, structures and cultures that inhabit TVET policy and practice and builds on existing strengths and capabilities.

> *"When we are able to take an appreciate stance we are free to choose and develop methods of inquiry that illuminate and create the fullest life-nourishing potential of human systems in the larger world"* (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008).

I now reflect on this journey almost with a sense of nostalgia, tinged with a feeling of accomplishment. I can now look forward to the next chapter in my professional life where I desire to serve in advocacy and consultancy roles regarding TVET in the local and regional context. I also see opportunities to become involved in communities of practice that help to promote TVET and create meaningful livelihoods for disaffected young persons. All in all, this experience has been a rewarding endeavour that has certainly helped to define me as a person;as a professional educator and as an insider-researcher.

9.5 Conclusion

The chapter presented summary statements and recommendations on the main findings of this study as well as possible implications and practical applications for consideration. In exploring student becoming within this micro context in the Caribbean as a heuristic for understanding the politics of difference, it was found that Deleuze's theory of becoming and difference complemented Sen's capability approach at critical points such as the role that freedom plays in such processes. In the final analysis, the knowledge gained from exploring the study's objectives was purposeful in providing key insights about how TVET could effectively operate within a higher education environment and in ultimately creating more fulfilling lived experiences for its students.

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Appendix 1: VPREC Ethical Approval Letter

Dear Arlene Smith Thompson				
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.				
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)			
Review type:	Expedited			
PI:				
School:		Lifelong Learning		
Title:				
First Reviewer:	Dr. Lucilla Crosta			
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Martin Gough			
Other members of the Committee	Dr. Anthony Edwards, Dr. Marco Ferreira, Dr. Janet Hanson			
Date of Approval:	15th January 2016			
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:				
Conditions				
1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.		

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.

Kind regards,

Lucilla Crosta

Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet for College Tutors, Programme Administrators and Ministry Permanent Secretary or Designate

Participant Information Sheet

College TVET Tutors and Programme Administrators
Ministry Permanent Secretary and Ministry TVET Programme Coordinator

Title of study

Exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of difference.

(Exploring TVET policies within a community college environment in the Caribbean by drawing on the experiences of students, teachers and administrators to understand how such discourses could impact future student aspirations and how the concept of difference is viewed within wider society.)

Invitation for your participation

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. **Thank you for reading this.**

Purpose of the study

This research study is being undertaken in partial fulfilment of a Professional Doctorate at the University of Liverpool. It explores technical vocational education and training (TVET) policies within a community college environment in the Caribbean. More specifically it seeks to understand the experiences of tutors, administrators and students within an existing TVET programme that provides skills training for young persons that have chosen this alternative educational pathway.

It is hoped that findings from this study will provide some insights about how students could develop their full potential in life and how tutors and administrators of the programme could help to facilitate such processes through innovative forms of engagement that focus less on differences and more on their becoming all that they can be. Most importantly, the study's

results could serve as a useful tool in looking at the language and practice of TVET policies and the important role that such discourses play in the higher education context in the Caribbean.

For purposes of this study, please be informed that my role as a researcher is separate from my professional role in the Ministry of Education and Culture as Remediation Coordinator and as an adjunct faculty member. Further I have never taught students in the TVET programme at HLSCC nor have I maintained any professional association with the tutors or administrators of the programme.

Rationale for your participation

You were invited to take part in this study because you are a tutor/programme administrator/Ministry of Education and Culture official associated with this programme, and for that reason have a valuable perspective on the operation of TVET in the BVI Other participants will include a select number of TVET students.

Do I have to take part?

No. Please note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation. You will not be penalised in anyway and the information you shared at the point of withdrawal will not be used in the study

What will happen if you participate?

Should you consent to take part in this study, you will be invited to take part in an individual semi-structured interview with myself that should last no longer than one hour. The location and time of the interview will be mutually agreed at your convenience. I can arrange to interview you in your office if you prefer such an arrangement. Alternatively, I can have another location set up such as a general conference room at the Government Administration Complex for ministry officials or a separate empty classroom or space at the 'Lambert Community College' for those participants that are affiliated with that organization. Should you agree to be a participant, you will be contacted and informed of the process that will be involved in your giving informed written consent.

It is desirous for me to have the interview recorded as this will help in my transcription and analysis of data. However, this will only be done with your prior consent. The interview recordings will only be accessed by the researcher and will be kept in a secure environment that is password protected. Once the interview recording has been transcribed I will arrange to show you the transcript if you wish in order to let me know if you are happy with them. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview. If you do not want to be recorded, I can take notes of your interview instead.

Please note that no one else will be involved in this interview process other than the researcher and you.

Expenses

Any expenses that should be incurred during this study will be undertaken by the researcher and will not be transferred in any way to you as the participant.

Compensation

There will be no need for compensations or reimbursements to participants for taking part in the study.

Risks

There are no preconceived risks associated with this study. In the event you experience any type of unanticipated discomfort as a research participant at any stage of this study, please feel free to make your concerns known to the researcher immediately.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you in taking part in this research, nevertheless the interview will provide you with an opportunity to contribute to a more detailed understanding of TVET policy which could be of benefit to the community.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to contact my research supervisor, Dr Janet Hanson, janet.hanson@online.liverpool.ac.uk, If you are unhappy you can contact me at arlene.smith-thompson@online.liverpool.ac.uk and I will try to help.

If you remain still unhappy you can contact theResearch Participant Advocate at USA number 001-612-312-1210 or email address liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com . When contacting the Research Participant Advocate please provide the details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher (s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

The data that is collected through the interview will be used for the sole purposes of this study and will not be disclosed to other parties. In so doing, every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality as a research participant. At no time will your identity be revealed as a pseudonym will be used from the point of transcription to preserve your anonymous status and will also be applied to the written thesis document and any related publications. The name of the institutions connected to this study will remain anonymous and any data that might make you identifiable will be removed from any public document.

The data provided will only be accessible to the researcher and be stored in a secured system that is password protected. Please note that no one else will be involved in this interview process other than the researcher and you.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will remain anonymous and will be used to fulfil the thesis requirements of the researcher's doctoral programme for the University of Liverpool. At all times participant data will remain unidentifiable which will also apply to any shared publications.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

As a participant, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done, otherwise you can request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Research supervisor
Name: Dr Janet Hanson
Work Address: University of Liverpool, UK
Work Email: janet.hanson@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Research student
Arlene Smith-Thompson (Principal lnvestigator)
Email arlene.smith-thompson@online.liverpool.ac.uk.

Research Participant Advocate (USA number 001-612-312-1210 or email address liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com

Please keep/print a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for your reference.

Arlene Smith-Thompson
Principal Researcher Signature: Date:

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet for TVET Current and Former Students

Participant Information Sheet
TVET Current Students and Former Students

Title of study

Exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of difference.

(Exploring TVET policies within a community college environment in the Caribbean by drawing on the experiences of students, teachers and administrators to understand how such discourses could impact future student aspirations and how the concept of difference is viewed within wider society.)

Invitation for your participation

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. **Thank you for reading this.**

Purpose of the study

This research study is being undertaken in partial fulfilment of a Professional Doctorate at the University of Liverpool. It explores technical vocational education and training (TVET) policies within a community college environment in the Caribbean. More specifically it seeks to understand the experiences of tutors, administrators and students within an existing TVET programme that provides skills training for young persons that have chosen this alternative educational pathway.

It is hoped that findings from this study will provide some insights about how students could develop their full potential in life and how tutors and administrators of the programme could help to facilitate such processes through innovative forms of engagement that focus less on differences and more on their becoming all that they can be. Most importantly, the study's results could serve as a useful tool in looking at the language and practice of TVET policies and the important role that such discourses play in the higher education context in the Caribbean.

For purposes of this study, please be informed that my role as a researcher is separate from my professional role in the Ministry of Education and Culture and as an adjunct faculty member. Further I have never taught students in the TVET programme at LCC nor have I maintained any professional association with the tutors or administrators of the programme.

Rationale for your participation

You were invited to take part in this study because you are a current or former student of this programme, and for that reason have a valuable perspective on the operation of TVET in the Caribbean. Other participants will include a select number of TVET tutors and administrators from the college and two representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Do I have to take part?

No. Please note that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation. You will not be penalised in anyway and the information you shared at the point of withdrawal will not be used in the study

What will happen if you participate?

Should you consent to take part in this study, you will be invited to take part in an individual semi-structured interview with myself that should last no longer than one hour where you will have an opportunity to share your story about what your experience has been as a student of the TVET programme. All interview sessions will be agreed to individually with potential participants. This includes the location which will also be mutually agreed to by the participant and the researcher and could be off campus. This is to ensure maximum confidentiality for you. Should you agree to be a participant, you will be contacted by email and later through a face-to-face meeting with the researcher and informed of the process that will be involved in your giving informed written consent.

It is desirous for me to have the interview recorded as this will help in my transcription and analysis of data. However, this will only be done with your prior consent. The interview recordings will only be accessed by the researcher and will be kept in a secure environment that is password protected. Once the interview recording has been transcribed I will arrange to show you the transcript if you wish. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview. If you do not want to be recorded, I can take notes of your interview instead.

Please note that no one else will be involved in this interview process other than the researcher and you. The data that you provide will be kept confidential and stored in secure locations. The name of the institution that you attend will not be used in the study to further protect your identity.

Expenses

Any expenses that should be incurred during this study will be undertaken by the researcher and will not be transferred in any way to you as the participant.

Compensation

There will be no need for compensations or reimbursements to participants for taking part in the study.

Risks

There are no preconceived risks associated with this study. In the event you experience any type of unanticipated discomfort as a research participant at any stage of this study, please feel free to make your concerns known to the researcher immediately.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you in taking part in this research, nevertheless the interview will provide you with an opportunity to contribute to a more detailed understanding of TVET policy which could be of benefit to the community.

What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to contact my research supervisor, Dr Janet Hanson, janet.hanson@online.liverpool.ac.uk, If you are unhappy you can contact me at arlene.smith-thompson@online.liverpool.ac.uk and I will try to help.

If you remain still unhappy you can contact theResearch Participant Advocate at USA number 001-612-312-1210 or email address liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com . When contacting the Research Participant Advocate please provide the details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher (s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

Will my participation be kept confidential?

The data that is collected through the interview will be used for the sole purposes of this study and will not be disclosed to other parties. In so doing, every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality as a research participant. At no time will your identity be revealed as a pseudonym will be used from the point of transcription to preserve your anonymous status and will also be applied to the written thesis document and any related publications. The name of the institutions connected to this study will remain anonymous and any data that might make you identifiable will be removed from any public document.

The data provided will only be accessible to the researcher and be stored in a secured system that is password protected. Please note that no one else will be involved in this interview process other than the researcher and you.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will remain anonymous and will be used to fulfil the thesis requirements of the researcher's doctoral programme for the University of Liverpool. At all times participant data will remain unidentifiable which will also apply to any shared publications.

What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

As a participant, you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done, otherwise you can request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Research supervisor
Name: Dr Janet Hanson
Work Address: University of Liverpool, UK
Work Email: janet.hanson@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Research student
Arlene Smith-Thompson (Principal lnvestigator)
Email arlene.smith-thompson@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Research Participant Advocate (USA number
001-612-312-1210 or email address
liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com

Please keep/print a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for your reference

Arlene Smith-Thompson
Principal Researcher Signature: Date:

Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:	Exploring student *becoming* within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of *difference.*
Researcher(s):	Arlene Smith-Thompson

		Please initial box
1.	I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated 19th December 2015 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.	☐
3.	I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.	☐
4.	I understand that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me in any publications. Anonymity will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms at all times.	☐
5.	I understand and agree that my participation will be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for the purpose of transcription of data.	☐
6.	I understand that I must not take part if I feel uncomfortable during any part of the research proceedings that I am involved in.	☐
7.	I agree for the data collected from me to be used in relevant future research and understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee.	☐
8.	I understand that once I submit my data it will become anonymised. However, I am free to request withdrawal of data at any stage if I so choose.	☐
9.	I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission	☐

for the research supervisors to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

10. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Participant Name	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Student Researcher:

Name: Arlene Smith-Thompson
Work Email:arlene.smiththompson@liv.ac.uk

Research supervisor:

Name: Dr Janet Hanson
Work Address: University of Liverpool, UK
Work Email: janet.hanson@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix 5: Letter of Authorization from Community College

[redacted]

[redacted]

December 17, 2015

Mrs. Arlene Smith-Thompson

[redacted]

Dear Mrs. Smith-Thompson:

Having reviewed your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct a thesis study entitled, "Exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of difference." As part of this study that you will conduct at the

[redacted]

I authorize you to:

- Interview 6 subject tutors in the TVET Programme
- Interview I TVET programme coordinator
- Interview the Head of Technical Studies
- Conduct face-to-face meetings with current TVET students to garner their interest in the study and to eventually draw a sample of 5 volunteers who will share their experiences through narratives
- Collect data based on document analysis related to TVET programme policy at the institution

- Collect data from interviews and narratives for further analysis
- Use the collected data to complete your pilot and thesis and share anonymous data with your thesis supervisors at University of Liverpool.

will:

- Inform subject tutors and programme administrators about your study
- Contact current students of the TVET Programme via email and face-to-face meetings informing them of your study and its intent
- Provide email contacts of former students of the programme that will allow you to personally contact them informing them of your study's intent and your desire to include a sample of their narrative stories in your study
- Make the necessary policy documents available that are related to the TVET programme

I understand that individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion and that participants can opt out of the research at any time if they so wish.
Mrs. Arlene Smith-Thompson
December 17, 2015
Page 2

We understand that our organisation's responsibilities include the provision of time and resources to carry out the work related to the study, and special/extra accommodations above and beyond those provided for the normal work-based project are not required in order for you to complete your EdD thesis research. We understand that this research is being supervised by your academic supervisors at the University of Liverpool, Dr. Janet Hanson and Dr. Anne Qualter. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain confidential, will be retained securely and can only be shared externally (in papers or conference presentations) with permission from the University's Ethics Committee.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix 6:Questons for TVET Tutors at LCC

Script to myself at the beginning of the interview:

Good morning ……..

Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to share your thoughts about the TVET programme at LCC. As you are aware, the programme has been in existence since 2006. The institution, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education has continued to play a significant role in the delivery of the programme's objectives, which is mainly skills training for young persons that will aid in their overall development.

As outlined in my participant information sheet that you would have reviewed, the purpose of this study is to explore technical vocational education and training (TVET) policies within a community college environment. More specifically the study seeks to understand the experiences of policy designers, tutors such as yourself, administrators, and students within this programme.

It is hoped that findings from this study will provide some insights about how students could develop their full potential in life and how programme designers in the policy environment, tutors and administrators could help to facilitate such processes through innovative forms of engagement that focus less on differences and more on their becoming all that they can be. Most importantly, the study's results could serve as a useful tool in looking at the language and practice of TVET policies and the important role that such discourses play in the higher education context.

Please note that you are free to withdraw from this process at any point if you become uncomfortable. This semi-structured format of interviewing is designed to allow you to express your points of view freely without feeling pressured or coerced in any way.

1. How long have you been a tutor in this TVET programme and what subject do you teach?

a. Using three positive adjectives, how would you describe your experience as a TVET programme tutor?

b. Would you like to share a success story that is based on your involvement with the programme?

c. What do you appreciate most as a tutor about the TVET programme at LCC?

d. Are there any limitations or drawbacks that could possibly hinder you from executing your role?

2. In your role as a tutor, how would you describe your relationship with students that are enrolled in the programme?

a. What are your expectations of students' potential to succeed in this environment?

b. Are there any positive stories that you would like to share that have emerged as a result of your tutorial relationship with students?

c. If you were given an opportunity to suggest changes to the TVET syllabus, what are some changes you would suggest and why?

3. Are there specific institutional policies or arrangements, whether formal or informal, that guide your work as a TVET programme tutor?

a. Were you afforded an opportunity to have an input in the framing of such documents over the years of your involvement with the programme in your capacity as a tutor?

b. LCC, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, has made significant progress in promoting the TVET programme as a skills training alternative for young persons that may not have succeeded in 'mainstream' education. Despite such efforts, the drop-out rate of the programme is around 50% of annual enrolment, which is quite high.

i. What are your views on why the drop-out rates in the programme are so high?

ii. What are some existing challenges that must be addressed from your point of view as a tutor?

4. A focal point of this research project is to explore other avenues of possibly connecting with students in individualized ways in this programme that pay closer attention to their personal needs and aspirations in life in addition to the skills training that they receive.

a. For the most part, TVET programmes are skill-based. Do you think that such programmes should also develop life-changing opportunities in addition to technical skills? Why or why not?

b. What is your understanding of a student being labelled as 'different' in the TVET learning environment?

c. Can you think of a future for TVET in our tertiary education system where difference is seen as a good phenomenon rather than bad? For you as a tutor, what would such a future look like?

d. Can you share, through a hypothetical example, your understanding of a student 'becoming' within the context of the TVET programme at LCC?

i. Are you aware of any policy provisions in the college's TVET policy environment that may accommodate for student 'becoming' on a regular basis? ii. Can you share any innovative thoughts on how such a concept could be seamlessly implemented into your daily class routines as a tutor?

5. Are there any noticeable gaps that you have personally observed in existing TVET policies, whether formal or informal, between what is expected and what is actually practiced by students in the programme? By policy designers? By programme administrators?

a. To what extent are students' voices recognized in the TVET administrative environment as a way of influencing policy design?

b. What are your views on the importance of the student's voice in TVET policy design and implementation particularly as it relates to the concepts of 'becoming' and 'difference'?

c. If you had one wish for advancing TVET delivery in a tertiary environment such as LCC, what would that wish be?

6. As we conclude, I wish to invite you to share any final thoughts on the points we have elaborated on today. Further, please note that transcripts of this interview will be shared with you prior to any information being published as part of my thesis submission and that at all times your identity will remain anonymous.

7. Thank you kindly for willingly consenting to be a part of this interview. Have a good day.

Questions for current and former TVET students

Exploring student becoming within TVET policy discourses at a community college in the Caribbean: A heuristic for understanding the politics of difference.

Main research question

To what extent do TVET policy discourses in HE in the Caribbean influence student becoming as a heuristic for understanding the politics of difference?

Research sub-questions

What are the factors that shape TVET policy discourses at the macro, meso and micro level as understood by policy designers, administrators, tutors and students? 1. How is the concept of student becoming interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students? 2. How is the concept of difference interpreted within the local HE context by policy designers, tutors and students? 3. To what extent are existing policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering students' becoming within TVET programmes? 4. To what extent are policy discourses by policy designers helping or hindering the understanding of difference within the TVET HE population? 5. Are there gaps that exist between TVET policy and practice? 6. How can the student voice enhance policy discourses about becoming and difference?

Questions for current TVET students

Script to myself at the beginning of the interview:

Good morning ……..

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to sit and talk with you about your TVET programme. This is a somewhat informal process so I hope you will feel relaxed as we speak. However, if you do experience any feelings of discomfort, you are free to withdraw at any time from participating in this interview.

The questions I will ask are designed to get an understanding of what your experience has been like as a current student of the programme. I would also like to obtain your views on how you think participating in this programme could benefit you in the future.

The main purpose for my interview is to find out the best way for you to develop your full potential in life through a process known as student becoming. In other words, how can you become all that you can possibly be through this programme. As a researcher, I am interested in finding out how the Ministry of Education, LCC, and your tutors could help you on such a journey by taking a closer look at the programme's policies. In this process, it is also very important to obtain views from students such as yourself that actually participate in this programme. You have a voice and it is important for your voice to be heard.

1. Tell me about your experience so far as a student in this TVET programme.

Follow up questions:

a. Can you share some thoughts on what your experience was like with school prior to entering this programme?

b. How did you become a student in this TVET programme?

c. What is your favourite subject in the programme?

d. What do you like most about your course of study?

e. Have you experienced any challenging situations or difficulties as a student that you wish to share?

i. How did you feel as a result of those experiences?

ii. What did you learn about your challenges or difficulties that could help you in the future?

iii. If you could wave a magic wand into your future, where do you see yourself 5 years from now as a former student of this TVET programme?

f. What do you personally value most about yourself?

2. The Ministry of Education and LCC have recognized the importance of a TVET programme such as yours that helps to build the skill level of young people. Such skills, they hope, will also benefit the country in the long term.

a. Do you see yourself as making a positive contribution to the country as a result of the skills that you are acquiring in this programme?

i. Can you give 2 examples of how you will contribute positively to the BVI in the future with the skills you are now gaining?

ii. Apart from learning a skill, are there other areas that could benefit your future development socially that you would like to see addressed in this programme? If so, can you give 2 such examples?

b. How important do you think it is to have students such as yourselves voice their opinions about their experiences in programmes such as this?

i. Do opportunities exist for your voice to be heard regarding areas of this programme that you would like to see improved?

ii. Do you see areas where student involvement could make a difference in this programme in the future and even help to reduce the drop-out rates?

c. Why do you think some of your peers are unable to complete a programme such as this even though the ministry and college may view this initiative as something positive?

3. I would now like to hear your views on what it has been like to adjust to the LCC campus life in this TVET programme.

a. Do you see students who are different from others, in terms of how they approach their school work or other activities, as being a good or bad thing? Can you support your views with an example?

b. Can you think of an experience when you were made to feel different in this programme?

i. How did that experience make you feel?

ii. If you had one wish, what would it be regarding how students that are made to feel different in school environments should be treated?

c. How is your overall interactions with your TVET tutors?

d. What is your relationship like with other TVET students in the programme.

e. How do you think persons in the general community view you as a student of this TVET programme?

4. Let us now talk about your future.

a. If you are allowed to dream of a future that places no limits on your opportunities for achievement, what would such a future look like?

b. Do you think the achievement of such changes may require a change in your present identity?

c. What are some social skills you may require that will change your views of how you can 'become' or achieve even more as an individual in society in the future?

5. Are there any thoughts that you would like to add or questions you would like to ask before we conclude?

6. Thank you very kindly for taking the time out of your daily routine to be a part of this interview process.

Questions for former TVET students

Script to myself at the beginning of the interview:

Good morning ……..

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to sit and talk with you about your experience as a former student of the college's TVET programme. This is a somewhat informal process so there is no need for you to feel uncomfortable. However, if you do experience any feelings of discomfort, you are free to withdraw at any time from participating in this interview.

The questions I will ask are designed to get an understanding of what your experience has been like as a former student of the programme. I would also like to obtain your views as to whether participation in this programme has proven to be beneficial in shaping your future goals and aspirations.

The main purpose for my interview is to find out the best way for you to develop your full potential in life through a process known as student becoming. In other words, how can you become all that you can possibly be through your participation in such a programme.

As a researcher, I am interested in finding out how the Ministry of Education, LCC, and your tutors have helped you on such a journey by taking a closer look at the programme's overall policies. In this process, it is also very important to obtain views from former students such as yourself that actually participated in this programme. You have a voice and it is important for your voice to be heard.

1. Tell me about your experience as a former student in this TVET programme.

Follow up questions:

a. Can you share some thoughts on what your experience was like with school prior to entering this programme?

b. How did you become a student in this TVET programme?

c. What was your favourite subject in the programme?

d. What did you like most about your course of study?

e. Did you experience any challenging situations or difficulties as a student that you wish to share?

i. How did you feel as a result of those experiences?

ii. What did you learn about your challenges or difficulties that could help you in the future?

iii. Having gained some programme experience, if you could wave a magic wand into your future, where do you see yourself 5 years from now as a result of this experience?

f. What do you personally value most about yourself? Have your values changed as a result of your involvement with the TVET programme?

2. The Ministry of Education and LCC have recognized the importance of a TVET programme that helps to build the skill level of young people. Such skills, they hope, will also benefit the country in the long term.

a. As a result of your skills training, have you begun the process of making a positive contribution to the economy?

i. Can you give 2 examples of such the contributions you are already making? If not, can you discuss the barriers that you may have encountered that prevented you from doing so?

ii. Apart from learning a skill, are there other areas that could benefit your future development socially that you would have liked to see addressed in this programme? If so, can you give 2 such examples?

b. As a former student, how important is it to have your voice heard about your experiences in the programme?

i. Did opportunities exist for your voice to be heard regarding areas of this programme that you would have liked to see improved?

ii. Did you see areas where student involvement could have made a difference in this programme in the future and even help to reduce the drop-out rates?

c. Why do you think some of your peers were unable to complete a programme such as this even though the ministry and college may view this initiative as something positive?

3. I would now like to hear your views on what it has been like to adjust to the LCC campus life in this TVET programme.

a. Do you see students who are different from others, in terms of how they approach their school work or other activities, as being a good or bad thing? Can you support your views with an example?

b. Can you think of an experience when you were made to feel different in this programme?

i. How did that experience make you feel?

ii. If you had one wish, what would it be regarding how students that are made to feel different in school environments should be treated?

c. How was your overall interactions with your TVET tutors?

d. What was your relationship like with other TVET students in the programme.

e. How did you think persons in the general community viewed you as a student of this TVET programme?

f. In three words, describe what you felt on graduation day when you received your certificate.

4. Let us now talk about your future.

a. If you are allowed to dream of a future that places no limits on your opportunities for achievement, what would such a future look like?

b. Do you think the achievement of such changes may require a change in your present identity?

c. What are some social skills you may require that will change your views of how you can 'become' or achieve even more than is currently expected of you as an individual in society in the future?

5. Are there any thoughts that you would like to add or questions you would like to ask before we conclude?

6. Thank you very kindly for taking the time out of your daily routine to be a part of this interview process.